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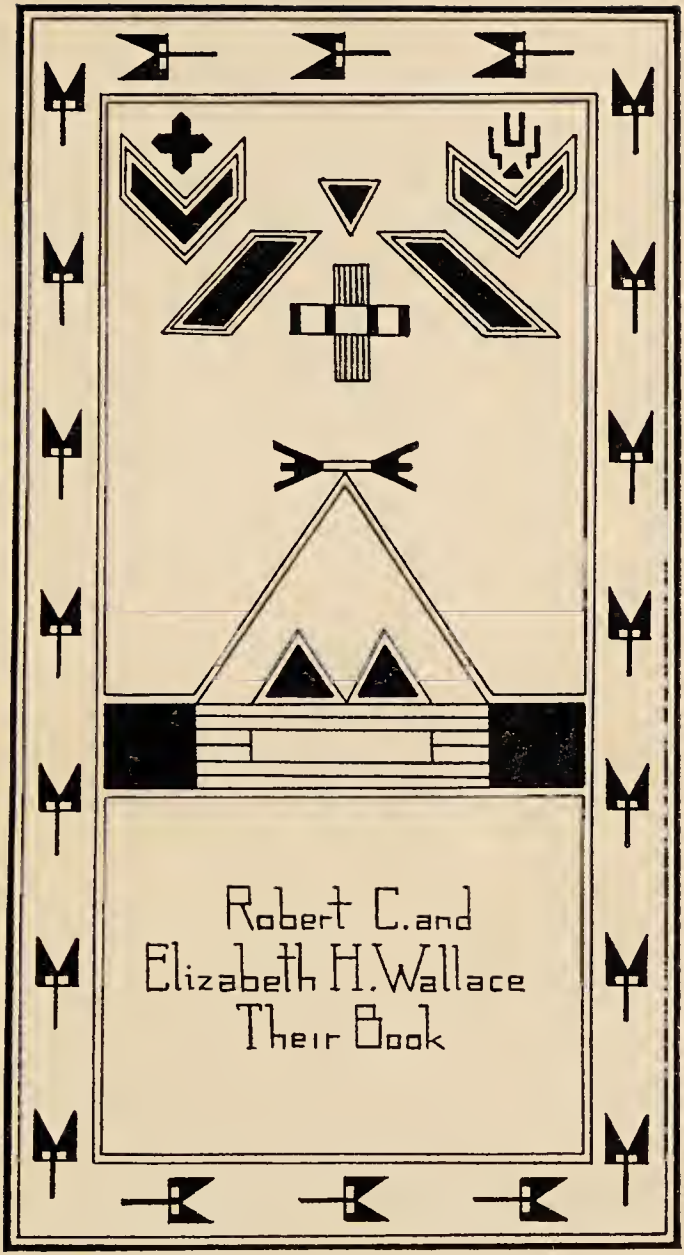
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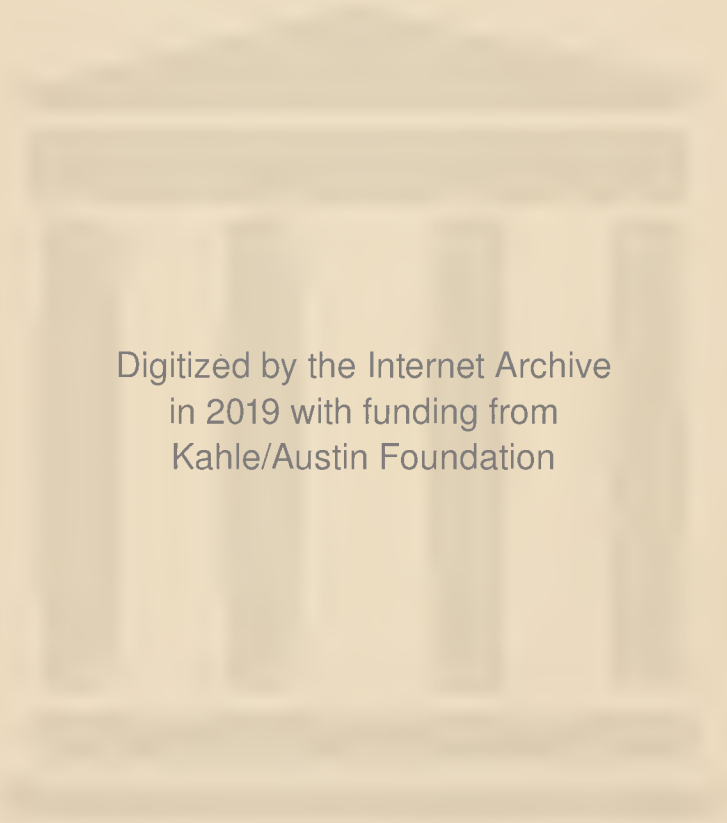

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# AFTER TWO THOUSAND YEARS

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

A MODERN SYMPOSIUM

THE MEANING OF GOOD

JUSTICE AND LIBERTY
A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

RELIGION AND IMMORTALITY

RELIGION: A CRITICISM AND A FORECAST

THE GREEK VIEW OF LIFE

THE MAGIC FLUTE
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PROPOSALS AND WAR AIMS, 1916–1918

WAR: ITS NATURE, CAUSE AND CURE

CAUSES OF INTERNATIONAL WAR

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

ETC.

# AFTER TWO THOUSAND YEARS

A DIALOGUE
BETWEEN PLATO AND A
MODERN YOUNG MAN

BY

G. LOWES DICKINSON

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
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# PREFATORY NOTE

This dialogue is continuous, and I have thought it better not to attempt to divide it into chapters. The contents are indicated by the side notes. But it may assist readers if I indicate briefly the general plan and principal divisions. The dialogue falls into two main parts, the first dealing with political and social institutions, which are regarded as means (pp. 11 to 117); the second with what are regarded as ends (pp. 117 to 213).

The principal divisions of Part I are as follows:—

1. Property (pp. 11 to 32).
2. Forms of Government (pp. 33 to 48).
3. Socialism (pp. 48 to 55).
4. The control of Population (pp. 55 to 83).
5. War (pp. 84 to 106).
6. Education (pp. 106 to 117).

Passing to Part II, the point is first raised whether Plato's *Republic* did not in fact so subordinate the individual to the community that nobody was in fact pursuing any real Good, not even the governing class, since they were compelled to descend and govern (pp. 118 to 124). Further, the question is discussed whether it might not be better that the mass of the citizens should attain what Good

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they could, rather than a few attain higher Goods at the cost of the majority (pp. 124 to 127). This, however, is dismissed as an unreal alternative; and the argument goes on to examine the character of real Goods in themselves as distinguished from means to other Goods.

The Goods thus discussed are:—

Truth (pp. 129 to 140).
Art (pp. 141 to 184).
Love (pp. 184 to 198).

In conclusion Plato reaffirms his belief that real Goods glimmer down from some higher world, which it is the destiny of spirits to pursue (pp. 198 to end).

# AFTER TWO THOUSAND YEARS

THE SPEAKERS ARE PLATO AND PHILALETHES.

PH. Plato! Is it really you?

PL. That was my name, I think, once, long ago. What place is this?

PH. The Elysian Fields.

PL. Ah! I begin to remember. Why did you call me?

PH. I did not call. I was thinking of you and you came.

PL. Your thought then drew me.

PH. From what place?

PL. No place and no time.

PH. Have I done you wrong to draw you back?

PL. The greatest wrong. Yet when I see you, I cannot but forgive it. By what name am I to call you?

PH. Call me Philalethes, for I seek the truth.

PL. It is for that that I love you.

PH. They do not love me for it here. I find none who feel my need.

PL. Here they do not seek but enjoy, and what they enjoy is beauty.

PH. So they tell me. But I want truth.

PL. What kind of truth?

PH. Every kind. But first—Plato, can you tell me?

PL. What?

PH. Is it possible to die, and yet not to be dead?

PL. Say rather, to live, yet not to be alive.

PH. Whichever it be, I think it is my case. For I cannot escape from the memory of Earth.

PL. You have not then drunk of Lethe.

PH. But why is that? What does it mean?

PL. That you are but a visitor here, not a native, and if you will you may return. The choice is yours.

PH. That then is why my mind is full of the matter of Earth. Yet it is not confused and stunned, as it used to be. I see calmly, as from the shore, the sea on which once I was tossed; and I have only one wish, to chart, if I but could, a course for the vessel that bears the freight of mankind. You, of all great souls, I knew could help me. And that is what brought you here.

PL. Whether I can help I do not know. Perhaps I might once have done so, had you been with me in Greece. But now I do not even know what is the state of the world.

PH. It has changed much, though in much it is the same.

PL. Tell me about it.

The Scale of the Modern World

PH. The theme is vast, far vaster than you knew. You saw indeed, as from above, our huge globe, turning through space and bright with the colours of the rainbow. But you had not travelled it, as we have.

PL. It was men, rather than the places in which they lived, that interested me. Have you found men wherever you travelled?

PH. Yes, wherever men could live.

PL. Civilised or barbarian?

PH. They live, many of them, in cities, but not in such cities as you knew. Ours are many times as populous.

PL. Yet even ours, I seem to remember, were too large for order.

PH. With us the whole scale is greater. Our cities may contain millions, and our empires hundreds of millions.

PL. But how do you order numbers so immense and spaces so vast?

PH. We have contracted space and time. We travel without horses faster than you could ride, and our messages girdle the world in less time than Pheidippides took to run from Athens to Sparta.

PL. And have these wonders also improved the order of your societies?

PH. No! It is that that is disquieting. The pigmies have grown into giants, but their form and constitution is the same.

PL. The soul, I conclude, has not improved in quality though it inhabits a vaster body.

PH. It would seem so. For we have, in our states, disorders of the same kind that you had in your cities. And because it was you that best diagnosed those, it was to you that my thoughts turned when I found myself here.

PL. Tell me, how long do you count it since I was living on the earth?

PH. More than two thousand years.

PL. During all those years I have been outside time, and I cannot be sure that my judgments, now that I am returned, would be as they were. Do you then continue to tell me what is in your mind, and I shall discover what is in mine.

PH. I will do my best. And since I am still a man, not a pure spirit, and have power to return to my body when I choose, I will follow the order natural to men.

PL. What is that?

PH. The concrete before the abstract. What is most material shall come first, as property and government, before I pass to education and religion, and whatever else may lie beyond.

PL. You put first things last and last first. But pursue, nevertheless, if you can, the order you have chosen.

Property in Land

PH. I will begin then with what, in your time as in ours, is the origin of all disorder. You remember how you taught that every city was really two not one, since rich and poor were always at feud?

PL. I remember.

PH. Well, from your time to ours, that has never ceased to be true.

PL. The land, then, has never been divided, as

once I proposed, equally among all the citizens?

PH. No. It has always been taken by the strong from the weak.

PL. As once by the Dorians in Greece.

PH. Yes, and as is happening still in countries of which you never heard.

PL. And are those who are dispossessed made slaves or helots, as in Greece?

PH. We do not now use those words; but the position is much the same. For having been driven from their own land, they are compelled, by need or law, to labour for their new masters.

PL. And upon that foundation of injustice, I suppose, there arises, in the end, a state of law, as once in Sparta?

PH. Yes. The land thus seized passes by inheritance or sale to generations of new owners.

PL. Those who in Sparta used to govern and fight.

PH. As once they did in all Europe. But that order has passed. Now they need no longer do either the one or the other. They own the produce of other men's labour, but they have no countervailing duties.

PL. They are, then, what I used to call drones?

PH. Perhaps when they live in the country it

might be harsh to say so. For some of them administer their property and perform, though not under obligation, some of the services of government. But in the cities it is different.

PL. Why so?

PH. The land there is like a fungus. Its value grows, as by a miracle, in a single night. Those who own it have only to sit still, and the money pours into their hands.

PL. A happy set of men indeed.

PH. Are they not? But there are others happier still.

PL. Is it possible?

PH. There are those who buy for a small sum land that is stolen from barbarians, without stirring from their seats thousands of miles away, and this land they sell to others at a profit, who sell it again, until at last it reaches the men who are actually to live upon it, superintending the labour of those from whom it has been taken. Would you not say that this is a class of money-makers even more remarkable than the others?

PL. It seems to constitute, indeed, an even purer case of taking money without giving any return.

PH. They have, however, their plea in justification. They say that, though money is made in this way, it is also lost. For some-

times men are unfortunate in their speculation.

PL. The service then that they claim to render is that of not losing?

PH. They say that, where one gains and another loses, these two cancel out, so that in the end no injustice is done.

PL. A curious view, that two injustices make one justice.

Manufacture

PH. Yes, but it is our view. This may serve as an example of how wealth may arise from land. But we have other ways of producing wealth unknown to you in Greece.

PL. What are those?

PH. One of the most important is what we call manufacture.

PL. Meaning?

PH. The word means making by hand, but the thing means making by machines.

PL. What are machines?

PH. I said, you will remember, that we can travel and convey messages with a speed which would have seemed incredible to you in Greece. The means whereby we do this we call machines. And in the same way we can make innumerable things. The machines do the work and the men tend the machines.

PL. You should be wealthy then beyond the dreams of Croesus.

PH. Some of us are. They are those who own the machines.

PL. Not those who work them?

PH. Oh no! They are the poorest of all.

PL. Nor those who devised them?

PH. They may be, but commonly they are not. For that kind of man is apt not to understand money-making, and he is often cheated out of his reward.

PL. Those then who own the machines are another kind of drone?

PH. They may be, but they need not. For there is much to be done where the machines are assembled. There may be thousands of men working there together, like your gangs of slaves in the mines, and these must be organised and controlled. The stuff must be bought upon which the machines operate and the products sold into which it is converted. And all that is work more difficult and complicated than I need attempt to explain.

PL. And that work, you say, is done by the owners of the machines?

PH. Sometimes. But very often not. Very often other men are hired to do it.

PL. In all such cases, then, the owners are drones?

Share-holding

PH. Once more, they may be, but they need not. For they may be working quite hard at something quite different.

PL. You perplex me more and more.

PH. I do not wonder. For I have not yet given you the key which turns that lock.

PL. Please let me have it.

PH. We have invented, in these later years, a plan whereby both land and machines may be owned by a large number of people each having so many shares. And those who own these shares may be doing work which has nothing to do with the business they help to own.

PL. I partly understand. This is a mixed kind, drones and not drones—drones in respect of the business in which they hold shares, and not drones in respect of what they work at?

PH. Yes. But there is another curious point. In so far as they own shares they are also, either by choice or by necessity, gamblers.

PL. How is that?

PH. These shares are always being bought and sold and their price is always going up or down. Those who are prudent or lucky buy when they are low and sell when they are high, and those who are rash or unlucky the opposite. Even those who do not want to gamble must do so, whether they will or no. For there is nowhere any real security, since, at any moment, the shares in any concern may become worth-

less or may rise to a fabulous amount. So extensive and all-pervading is this business of gambling that a whole class of men live by conducting it, and these often make great fortunes by nothing else. Sometimes one goes mad with success or another kills himself from failure. Like the waves of a stormy sea great masses of our society move thus continually up and down. They throw their foam on to the highest cliffs, then are sucked back into the gulf. But never, in all this tumult, do they touch, even remotely and from a distance, the actual business on whose fluctuations all their fortune depends.

PL. This is the strangest society of which I ever heard, though I heard, in my time, of much that was strange. Does every one in your societies thus gamble?

The Poor

PH. No, most people are too poor. They can only gamble in cock-fighting and other sports, such as you knew in Greece.

PL. It is these poor of whom I should like to hear further. What do they do?

PH. All the work that is done with hands and much that is not. They direct machines, dig from the bowels of the earth precious metals, count and figure, teach in school, dig and harrow and plough—do in fact everything that is done, except control their own labour.

PL. They seem to be, in many ways, like our slaves. But have you also, like us, a middle class? The Middle Class

PH. Oh yes. They are our most intelligent citizens—physicians and lawyers and sophists, as you would have called them, and many others.

PL. And are these middling in fortune, as well as in position?

PH. Yes. For with us position is nothing else but fortune.

PL. The more important is it for me to understand on what principle you distribute your wealth as you do, the greater part to those of whom many do little or nothing, and the least to those who do everything? The Distribution of Wealth

PH. Nothing would be more difficult to explain. We have a whole science about it, which would give you great delight. For it uses mathematics to show how necessary it is that everything should be just as it is.

PL. Mathematics is indeed the noblest of the sciences, for no matter is intermixed with it. But for that very reason how can it deal, in its purity, with anything that is material? Even the stars have some admixture of the baser element, and how much more must that be so with the bodies and passions of men?

PH. The science I speak of is not pure. It assumes, to begin with, all the concrete

facts, and then proves that, if they are so, the consequences must be so.

PL. But it is these concrete facts of which we are talking. Tell me then, if you will, in terms of them, how your wealth comes to be distributed as it is.

Inheritance of Wealth

PH. The most important fact is the institution called inheritance.

PL. Why so?

PH. Because, by virtue of that a man's opportunities depend on the wealth of his parents. If they are rich he starts rich too, if well-to-do, well-to-do, and if poor, poor.

PL. Of course. Pray continue.

PH. The occupations which are best paid are available only to the sons of the well-to-do, for they require long training, which the poor cannot afford, together with many other things that attend on wealth, as powerful friends, good manners, and the like.

PL. That I can understand. It was the same in Greece.

PH. The sons of the well-to-do are thus predestined from their birth to the work which is best paid, or, if they prefer it, to no work at all; while the sons of the poor are predestined to that which is worst paid.

PL. What I still do not understand is why some work is better paid than other.

PH. That is simple. The pay depends on the number of people applying for the work. If there is a great press of them they get less, if comparatively few they get more. The Mechanism of Distribution

PL. That then is the principle about which I was inquiring?

PH. Yes, if you call it a principle. We regard it as a law of nature.

PL. To me it seems unnatural, though all too human. But tell me something more. Since it is on numbers that pay depends, is there a point at which these are so great that there is no pay at all?

PH. Certainly. There are always many who can get neither work nor pay.

PL. Do they die then?

PH. Sometimes; and sometimes they turn to crime.

PL. Aha! I thought we should come to the drones with stings.

PH. Yes. But of late we have learned to take their stings out.

PL. How?

PH. By paying them for doing nothing.

PL. Oh admirable wisdom!

PH. There is much else I might try to explain about our institution of property, but for the moment let this suffice.

PL. It suffices, at least, to call up in my mind a curious image. Why this Society does not Crash

PH. What is that?

PL. I see a pyramid standing on its point.

PH. What point?

PL. The tiny class of the very rich. Above it rise the other ranks, increasing in breadth as they diminish in income, till at the top, spreading out far beyond the rest, stretch the huge armies of the poor. And what puzzles me is that this pyramid should be able to balance at all.

PH. Call it rather a top, driven by the whips of greed and need. The harder they smite the faster is the pace, and the greater the stability. But if they slacken the top begins to oscillate and is in peril of crashing to the ground.

PL. In peril? Does it not so crash in fact?

PH. It may do so. But our states, unstable though they be, are less so than your cities.

PL. Why is that?

PH. There are many reasons. One is their size.

PL. You have made up for that, as I understand, by your devices for contracting space and time.

PH. We have. But that applies as much to our governments as to our people. Whatever can be done, by way of quick transport, can be done as much by the one as by the other. So that revolution is no easier for us than it was for you.

PL. You said it was less easy.

PH. And it is.

PL. But why?

PH. I have not spoken yet of the strangest of all our mechanisms. The Press

PL. What is that?

PH. One that directs and controls the minds of men.

PL. Indeed? Of all machines that must be the most potent.

PH. It is. For by it, every day and many times a day, all news, true or false, is disseminated among our citizens. Not only are they told what has, or has not, happened; they are instructed also what to think or feel, when to laugh or cry, whom to hate or love. Statesmen, orators, poets, all are powerless against this monster. For a single puff of its nostrils blows away into space the best thoughts of the wisest and most experienced men.

PL. A wonderful engine indeed! Those who control it must have the power of gods.

PH. They have.

PL. And how are they selected?

PH. They select themselves. Rich men buy the machine.

PL. And by it rule you?

PH. Yes. And that is one reason why revolution is less frequent among us than it was among you.

PL. But do not the rich themselves make revolution, as they did in Greece?

Other Causes of Stability

PH. They would, if they thought that otherwise the poor might come to power. And in some cases they actually have. But in my own country that does not seem likely, or not yet.

PL. Why so?

PH. There are many reasons. Perhaps the chief is this, that the poor do not understand the system whereby they are born and continue poor. It seems to them a dispensation of nature, and they adapt themselves to what they have to bear.

PL. Until it becomes unbearable?

PH. As it may do. Yes. But meantime many of them bear no grudge against the rich. Often indeed they feel more akin to them than to the poor. For they find in them the same passions that move themselves. They like men who are full-blooded, eat and drink well, are tall and broad, love field-sports and look askance at anyone with brains. And they mistrust even their friends, if they are pale and thin, and always talking and worrying, as many of them are. Since they cannot be rich themselves (though even that may hover as a dream before them), the next best thing, they feel, is to have rich men to look at, to bet on their sports, gossip

about their vices and admire their women. And for these kind of reasons they would be more likely to defend than to attack the existing order, even if gain to themselves were promised from its overthrow.

PL. If the poor are as docile as that, you have indeed nothing to fear or to hope from revolution.

PH. Those I have been speaking of I should call rather animal than docile. There are, however, many others who, for various reasons, would not be likely to support revolution. Some are too poor and miserable to have any purpose at all except to live somehow by begging or stealing. Others must work so continuously and so hard to keep themselves from starvation that they fear, more than anything else, an interruption that may fling them on the streets; and this is especially true of the women who have children to care for. But, more important than anything else, the poor themselves are divided into many grades; where one is starving another is comparatively prosperous, where one is skilled another is unskilled, and there is little sense of solidarity between these groups. And even if—as has happened—they should all wish to act together yet, while the rich control the public force, the poor can only try to defeat them by

ceasing work, and at that game the rich can always hold out the longest.

PL. In your view then, these societies of yours, unjust as you describe them to be, will nevertheless endure for ever?

But this Stability must have its End

PH. I have not forgotten, dear master, that even your ideal city was not to do that; much less our perverse states. Everything flows, as your Heracleitus taught and as our philosophers assent, broad deep rivers, no less than tumbling brooks. We are changing and must change. The only question is, whether we shall fall from precipice to precipice, or flow without break, majestic and calm, to the all-embracing sea.

PL. And which do you expect?

PH. I dare not say. We are in the rapids. Already there have been revolutions.

PL. Of the poor against the rich?

PH. More commonly the opposite. But those revolutions are not profound. For the rich having seized power do nothing with it, except to buttress up a perishing order. So that they are only preparing the way for greater catastrophes.

The Russian Revolution

PL. But has there been no revolution of the poor against the rich?

PH. Yes, one, and that is far more significant.

PL. Did they expel or murder the rich, as ours did in Greece?

PH. They did, and on a scale which you never knew. Not hundreds but thousands and tens of thousands were thus dealt with.

PL. And the result?

PH. It is early to forecast. But in their attempt one thing interests me.

PL. What is that?

PH. They have reversed the fundamental law of all our societies. Labour with them is now the only title, I will not say to wealth, for they are poor, but to subsistence and honour.

PL. It is a better foundation than the other whereon to build such Good as men are capable of achieving. Dare I hope that those who have taken over the power in this country are something like my philosopher-kings?

PH. Oh no! There is nothing they despise as they do philosophy, unless it be religion.

PL. What kind of men are they, then, who govern?

PH. Those who work with their hands in the cities.

PL. And the countrymen? For they among us, were usually opposed to revolution.

PH. They have been quieted by the gift of the land.

PL. A revolution indeed!

PH. Yes, and one of the most common and the

least reversible. That part of the change at least will endure.

PL. And what of the land in the cities, from which you said such great fortunes are made?

PH. The owners are gone. Their land is now the land of the community.

PL. And the machines of which you spoke?

PH. Their owners too are gone. All now is in the hands of those who work.

PL. And the middle class? The physicians and lawyers and the like?

PH. In so far as they are wanted, they are employed and paid like the rest, because they are doing work that is required.

PL. And is this society, thus based not on property but on labour, also good, or at least happy?

PH. That it would be hard to say. The people are very poor.

PL. Poverty I never thought an evil. I would have had my philosophers poor.

PH. But the poverty you conceived was not that which men have to bear. Your philosophers were to have enough for their needs. They were set free from anxiety about food and drink and clothes and shelter, educated in all noble arts of body and mind and soul, and destined to the government of the city. But poverty, as men really know it, is need, ignorance,

sickness, limitation, everything which the best men would and do give all their energies to escape, as a condition of being or doing anything good. It is indeed, one might almost say, the fear of such poverty that is the root of most of the evils of our societies.

PL. Such poverty I would not have had anywhere for anyone, any more than I would have had such wealth as you have described. Is that then all that this great revolution has achieved?

PH. Oh no! They are not most of them poorer than they were before, and some of them are better off. But it is their minds and souls rather than their bodies that have gained. For they believe themselves to be leaders in a great cause where all the world will follow, and in that they take a pride, not ignoble or base, which may well be better than happiness or comfort.

PL. What is that cause?

PH. The just distribution of what wealth there is. And this they intend to spread throughout the world.

PL. How? By persuasion?

World-revolution

PH. Oh no! By force. They hope that, in every country, a minority of the poor will seize power, expel or kill the rich, and set up, on the ruins of the old order, a society like their own.

PL. And is there a chance that this will happen?

PH. Not much, I think. But the fear of it obsesses the rich everywhere throughout the world. In the earlier days they tried to destroy the revolution by famine and slaughter. But the more they strove to quench the fire the more fiercely it raged, since men inspired by an idea draw from it a source of strength inaccessible to those who are moved by nothing better than fear and greed. So, after inflicting suffering beyond the power of words to describe, the other states of the world are ready now to make terms with the rebel, thinking that, if they cannot destroy the revolution, they may at least try to make profit from it. But the rebel intends no permanent truce with them. For still he expects universal revolution and fosters it every way he can.

PL. But you do not think he will succeed?

PH. No. And even if he did, I cannot believe, as they do, that from the sea of blood thus sluiced upon the world, there would arise, like a new Aphrodite, universal fraternity and peace.

PL. Yet one way or another you seemed to think your societies must change.

Forms of Government

PH. Yes. And how they might change for the better my mind is continually revolving.

PL. And what are your thoughts?

PH. First, I want to ask you about yours. You seemed to think, at any rate when you wrote your *Republic*, that everything depended on the governing class.

Government by Philosophers

PL. Yes.

PH. It was, you said, to be composed of philosophers.

PL. Yes.

PH. By philosophers you meant, I know, something very different from what philosophers have ever been. For yours were to have been trained in physical and military exercises, and also to have had not only a liberal education, but what seems to have been a mystic initiation into the nature of Good. But I would like to ask you, if I may . . .

PL. What?

PH. Did you really believe that any such class of philosophers could be produced?

PL. I hardly remember. Perhaps I did, at that time.

PH. And that, if they were produced, people would ever permit them to govern?

PL. If they could have come into being I do not doubt that they could have governed, with the help of the soldiers from whom they were to be recruited, and who were to be trained to support them.

PH. Well, I will not press that point, since

your philosophic city never came into existence, and it was not long before mere cities ceased to be of great importance. But setting that aside, did not you yourself come to despair of your own ideal? For, in your old age, the constitution you drew up was very different from that of your Republic.

PL. It was. But I always regarded it as only a second best.

PH. Oh dear master, how thankful should we be if we could achieve not even a second best, but a third or a fourth! At any rate, you abandoned the idea of government by philosophers?

Government by Religion

PL. Yes, for men, I had come to see, are incapable of philosophy. So I fell back on religion as a stronger bit to put in their mouths.

PH. Yes, and in that you were prophetic. For though your government by philosophers never even made a show of coming into being, either in your own or in later times, your government by priests had a future and a long one.

PL. Indeed? Tell me about that!

PH. Not now. It is a long and lamentable tale. But since your first best never came into being, and your second best aborted as it did, let us fall back on the other forms that have wandered continually through the world.

PL. You mean, I suppose, Tyranny, Oligarchy, Democracy? Other forms of Government

PH. That is what their enemies call them. Their friends use the names Monarchy, Aristocracy, Constitutional government.

PL. The two sets of names among us represented two sets of opposite things, the one the good, and the other the bad.

PH. I know. But in fact neither the good nor the bad forms existed in their purity but all were mixed of good and evil, as they have been ever since in all history. That was made clear, for the Greek world, by your pupil Aristotle.

PL. Aristotle was an able young man. But in Good and Evil, as in Beauty and its opposite, he was not deeply versed.

PH. Perhaps not. But he described well the things he investigated. Insomuch that, when the city became once again a principal unit of government, his account, given two thousand years before, was found to be still applicable.

PL. Where did that happen?

PH. In Italy.

PL. If the conditions there were similar to ours in Greece, they must have been lamentable indeed.

PH. They were, for the most part. The cities ran through the old Greek course of oligarchies, democracies, tyrannies, fight-

ing meantime continually with one another, until all alike were subdued, as were yours in Greece, under a foreign foe.

PL. And was this the only case in which our conditions repeated themselves?

PH. The only one of importance. For generally, as we began by saying, the world has been divided, not into cities but into kingdoms and empires.

PL. Those we too knew. But to us they appeared to be merely hordes of barbarians.

PH. Strange are the revolutions of human affairs! For many centuries past, that is the description men would have given of Greece.

PL. Indeed? But these kingdoms and empires of which you speak, did they develop anything new in government?

PH. In administration much. And even in the form of government it is claimed that a discovery was made.

PL. What is that?

The mixed form

PH. The blending of your three Greek forms, Kingship, Oligarchy Democracy.

PL. The only three-headed monster I recall in Greek mythology is Cerberus.

PH. Yet it was one of your countrymen who first praised this mixed form.

PL. Who was that?

PH. One Polybius.

PL. Tell me about him.

PH. He was taken as a hostage by the Romans, after they conquered Greece, became the friend of their great men, and described their constitution as a perfect balance of the three Greek forms.

PL. And was it really that?

PH. No. There were indeed the three elements, executive officers, assembly of nobles, and people. But in fact, at that time, the nobles dominated all, and in essence the constitution was aristocratic or oligarchic.

PL. And did it so continue?

PH. Not for long. An attempt was made to strengthen the democratic element, but it failed. There followed a century of civil war, till finally a monarch arose and reduced all under himself.

PL. There seems nothing new in all this.

PH. Nothing but the space and the time. The empire thus founded endured for a few centuries. Then it was broken up by invasions of barbarous tribes. Ferment and anarchy overspread the western world, till from it emerged a number of states governed monarchically. But meantime my own country, unlike the rest, had developed, like Rome, what was called the mixed form.

PL. And in your case was it really that?

PH. Hardly. A bid was made by the king to

convert it into a true monarchy but that was defeated by war. After the usual interlude of tyranny the old constitution reappeared, but now, in essence though not in form, an oligarchy. And of recent years it is being converted into what we call democracy.

PL. To be superseded, as in Rome, by dictatorship?

PH. It is that that remains to be seen. Is this perpetual circle to revolve for ever, or can mankind attain to a higher form?

PL. Of what form are you thinking?

Is a true Democracy Possible?

PH. Of a democracy that should not be a mere disorder, issuing in tyranny, but a co-operation of all to transform society into something better.

PL. Did you not say that already, in many of your states, tyrannies had been set up.

PH. Yes. There are indeed only three of our more powerful communities in which democracy survives, and perhaps, even there, only precariously. The smaller states are in better case. But that is because, being small, they do not devote their resources to war and have leisure and interest and intelligence to give to problems of importance.

PL. Your picture is not a very hopeful one, from your own point of view.

PH. No. To be hopeful now would require a

very robust faith or else an invincible blindness. But hope, in any case, is fragile. There is something better, Will.

PL. Tell me then whither you would set your will.

PH. I speak as a citizen of my own country, and a child of its history and character.

PL. Forgive me that I have never asked you what that country is. I find it easier to come into contact with a mind than with space and time.

England and the English

PH. My country matters little. It lies far in the north and I doubt if you had ever heard of it. At any rate, in your time it contained nothing but barbarians. But now it is the centre of a great empire, extending over a quarter of the globe.

PL. Indeed! Its policy then should have weight in determining the future.

PH. It should. But being an empire it comprises under its dominion many millions of people alien to its traditions and blood and recalcitrant to its influence. I am speaking, however, now only of the inhabitants of the island that is the centre of this system, and of their offshoots distributed across the oceans, as yours were once across the Mediterranean. It is of them I do not despair that they might save democracy for themselves and restore or extend it to others.

PL. You interest me. What is the character of this people on which you build your hopes?

Their Practical Character

PH. One thing I must confess from the beginning. Never was any people less philosophical.

PL. Not even the Athenians?

PH. Even? Why they, we think, were ruined by philosophy!

PL. Yet they killed Socrates and banished Anaxagoras.

PH. We never did that, it is true. But the reason is that we are so well convinced that philosophers never have any effect on anything. If we thought they did we should, no doubt, expel or kill them. But as it is, we regard them as a kind of performing animal and trot them out on occasions to compete with those of other countries. "If that's the kind of thing you admire," we say, "we can produce it every bit as good as you, if not better." And we expect the philosophers, in return, to concern themselves only with philosophy, and not to intrude on matters of importance. We feel indeed a kind of indignation mingled with contempt when they attempt this trespass.

PL. Indeed! And why is that?

PH. I shall try to tell you, putting into words what my countrymen seldom trouble to put into thoughts. Something of this

kind, I can imagine them saying:—"After all, it is men like us who made, as it is ourselves who sustain our society, defend it when it is attacked, suffer with its suffering, and prosper with its prosperity. We do not pretend it is perfect, but, such as it is, it does somehow exist. Philosophers criticise it. Nothing is easier to do. But they never come down and do a day's work beside us."

PL. If they are true philosophers they do not a day's but a life's work, exposing what is evil and urging what is good.

PH. "But then," our busy men reply, "what is the use of that? Here are we tossing in a storm, our sails split, our masts gone, the waves dashing over the deck and threatening to drown the man at the helm. Then comes the philosopher, walking daintily on the shore, and shouts to us 'Look out! You're drifting on to the rocks. Your rudder is smashed. You'll certainly go to the bottom.' And if the captain of the ship hears—which he is not likely to do—and calls back 'What are we to do then?' he is told, as often as not, 'you had better scuttle the ship.' He does not, of course. He sticks to his job and wears through as he can. Perhaps he weathers the storm, perhaps not. But in any case he has done his best."

PL. It is indeed vain for the philosopher to call from the shore. It would be better for him to keep silence where he can be of no service. For you would not, I suppose, have him embark on such a voyage?

PH. Dear master, did not you embark when you went to Sicily?

PL. Yes, and to fail lamentably.

PH. But then, returning to Athens, you did at least teach.

PL. With what result?

Have the Practical men done better than the Philosophers

PH. It is that doubt that has led me to the point where I am. For if it be true that you, the greatest of all philosophers, you whose words, after two thousand years, spite of all changes in language, government, religion are read and studied and commented in every university and school —if in spite of this, it be true that never have you had any effect at all on the actual life of men—may that not be because, as my fellow countrymen maintain, it is only on the deck of the ship, in the midst of the lashing storm, that counsel can be either heard or followed?

PL. Dear boy, how I love your earnestness! Your question I cannot answer, so long is it since my mind has been conversant with the life of men. But I will ask you—did these captains on the deck save Athens from destruction?

PH. No. She fell under the rule of those she called barbarians, and only the teachings of her philosophers, like a setting sun, lit the years of her declining age.

PL. And after her?

PH. After her, kingdoms and empires rose.

PL. And fell?

PH. Yes.

PL. Then. . . .

PH. Oh yes, dear master, I know what you would say. The practical men have done no better than the philosophers. Perhaps it is true. But still, these Powers that rise and fall are but the waves. The sea, which is mankind, persists.

PL. The sea, I think, is not mankind, but something vaster and more sublime.

PH. It may be. But that vastness a mere man dare not face. It is of mankind that I think, and of my own country, though it be but one tone in that whole concert which, as yet, is but tuning up.

PL. What tone then is it, that your country plays? For contempt for philosophy seems to be rather a silence than a note.

The English have the Quality of Moderation

PH. I was thinking of a quality we might name moderation; the power to follow what you called, in Greece, the middle course.

PL. We were always praising that, I admit. But we did not possess it.

PH. You praised it because you did not possess it. But we possess without praising it.

PL. To what effect?

PH. We are unwilling to go to extremes. We talk violently. But when there opens before us the gulf of catastrophe, we are apt to draw back and make a compromise, inconsistent with all we have thought and said and done before.

PL. Would it be right, then, to define moderation as obstinacy tempered by fear?

PH. Perhaps. I do not say it is a noble virtue. But has nobility, all through history, ever altered the course of events? The saints and heroes may have saved their own souls, they have never saved the world.

PL. Perhaps the only salvation of the world is the salvation of souls, and no one can save any but his own. But let us go on. Moderation, you say, restrains. And what it restrains, I suppose, is this conflict of rich and poor, which, you tell me, divides your states as it did our cities in Greece.

PH. Yes.

And by this they might solve the Problem of Poverty

PL. Do you mean then that the rich, by virtue of moderation, will consent peaceably to a levelling of wealth?

PH. I do not say levelling, for I am not sure that anyone wants that. But I think that, given one condition, they might consent to very radical changes.

PL. What is that condition?

PH. That the changes made should be made gradually.

PL. That was seldom or never done in Greece.

PH. No, for you were not moderate. But we are, and have been for many years. By a gradual process we have changed the form of our government from oligarchy to democracy and the change has proceeded so slowly that people have hardly known it was going on. And my idea is that, in the same way, we might transform property.

PL. Property fits men like a Nessus-shirt. It will be hard to tear it off without bringing the flesh with it.

PH. Yes. But I would not tear it off. I would remove it tenderly and slowly, so that the owners would hardly know that they were being stripped.

PL. You would be a wonderful physician indeed, if you could achieve that.

PH. Already it is being achieved, under the narcotic of moderation by the scalpel of taxation. We take from the rich a large part of their income, and from legatees a large part of their inheritance. We have only to take further those increases in the value of land which are always putting a fortune into the pockets of men who do nothing in return, and we shall be well in

the way of approaching an equitable society.

PL. Would all this affect your curious method of determining wages?

The Equal Start

PH. Yes, and best of all, indirectly, without anyone knowing it is being done. For as hereditary advantages gradually disappear the handicap which reserves the work that is best paid for the well-to-do, and drives the poor to struggle, often in vain, for the chance of the worst-paid, will disappear of itself.

PL. I understand. There will still be a race, but the start will be equal.

PH. Yes.

PL. Like all Greeks, I believed in athletics, because they make the body beautiful and strong. But will this kind of race do the same for the soul?

PH. I do not pretend it. I say only that it will be better than a race where the competitors are handicapped by weights arbitrarily imposed, so that the feeblest and worst often come in first.

PL. If I were trying to think, as I used to do, how a noble society might be planned, I should conceive some better motive for labour than that of pay.

PH. Dear master, so would I, if I were building an ideal city. But men are as they are, though they may change by slow degrees.

Artists, poets, men of science, may work for the sake of the work, but their work is a joy in itself. Most of ours is not. No one would do it, if they could help it. And it might be the best, rather than the worst, who, if their needs were otherwise provided, would refuse to do what must be done if our society is to exist at all.

PL. I will take it from you then that your citizens will only work for pay. But might not the pay at least be equal? The Equal Wage

PH. It might, perhaps, some day. But so far as I have been able to observe there is almost nobody who wants that at present, or is likely to want it in a near future. There are many who think it wrong that some should be rich without doing any work in return, while many, though working hard, should be half starved. But there are few who would admit equality of pay.

PL. Still fewer then, I imagine, who would admit payment according to need?

PH. We have made some little progress in that direction. We help to support, at the public expense, the sick and the aged, and in our taxation we make some distinction between those who have to rear children and those who have not. We may go further in that direction, but I hardly think we shall go very far. Payment according to Need

PL. I understand. You will still be racing, but

without the handicaps you now impose; and for those who collapse in the race you will provide assistance. Otherwise you will make no important change?

Socialism

PH. That I would not venture to say. For there is raging among us, at this moment, another controversy that grows daily fiercer and fiercer.

PL. What is that?

PH. Whether the conduct of manufacture and trade should be left either to individuals, or to groups of private citizens, as has been the case through most of our history; or whether, as some maintain, it should be directed and controlled by government.

PL. Please explain further.

PH. The controversy dates from the invention of machines. Before that time we produced by hand as you did in Greece, and what was then made was not only more beautiful and sound than anything we now have, but the process of making it was more enjoyable, varied and intelligent. But with machines has come the division of society into a class of owners and directors on the one hand and of workers of every kind on the other.

PL. I remember.

PH. Well, in the earlier stages, the results were even worse than they are now, so bad indeed that generous men, driven to the

opposite extreme, conceived the idea that, since individuals, left to their own devices, had produced results so terrible, the only remedy was to make the whole society owner and director of all machines, that all might profit alike by the wealth all produced. Many systems of this kind rose like exhalations. Some were fantastic, some coldly rational, some mixed. But all presupposed that men were more intelligent or more disinterested than hitherto they have shown themselves to be. The ideas were ridiculed, and the few attempts made to put them into practice extinguished in oceans of blood. Only in these very latest days, as I explained to you, has the attempt been made, on a large scale, to establish a society in which labour should be the only title to wealth. That experiment is still continuing and I dare not prophesy how it may end. But its influence has been profound. For in every other country it has called into existence groups of adherents who are ready to drown their own societies in blood in the hope of transforming them thereby into the likeness of the land of their desire.

PL. I am not surprised that evils so vast as those from which you suffer should engender others that may be vaster.

PH. Nor I. And in fact this movement has

put our societies into the dilemma, either of being overthrown by violent revolution, or of being converted into tyrannies of the rich; unless they can, while there is yet time, by peaceable means, transform their anarchy into something at least tolerable, if it cannot be ideal.

PL. And is the transformation of which you are now thinking something more and other than the changes you have sketched in the property system?

The Real Issue

PH. It is other, but consequent. Hitherto, as I said, the conduct of industry has been left mainly in the hands of individuals, uncontrolled by law. But under pressure of events inroads have been made on this anarchy. Government, inspired by various motives, sometimes philanthropic, sometimes prudent, has intervened to protect the more helpless and miserable victims. Such intervention has always been fiercely resisted by the class of masters; and even now there are many who would like to undo even what has been done.

PL. And what is your own attitude?

PH. I must recur to what I said before, that advice to be useful must be given from the deck of the ship not from the shore; and we, for the moment, are on a farther shore than any philosopher on earth. But one thing at least was plain even there,

and is plainer here. Theory is only valid if and when it is tested by practice. The general assumptions either that all intervention by government is bad, or the opposite, that universal control by government is good, are but banners flying in the wind to assemble armies of ghosts. The real armies are contending in the real world, and where they fight results are being achieved which make absurd the devices on the banners. The question is no longer Shall government intervene? It has intervened. The question is How far, in what way, over what field? And the answer must be worked out in the thick of the conflict. Only one thing is vital, in my judgment, that the conflict be of thoughts, not arms. For where arms intervene none can say whether there will be anything left, when they have finished, for agreement and reason to reconstruct.

Government to be Successful, must be Democratic

PL. And this government, which you think will more and more intervene, you also think must be democratic?

PH. It cannot at least, as you yourself came to see in Greece, be government by philosophers. And if not philosophic, in your sense, from what other kind of government, save democracy, could we have hope?

PL. Perhaps from an aristocracy?

PH. Has that ever, in fact, been anything but

a name by which oligarchies have chosen to call themselves? The only real alternative to democracy is government by the rich, and we know too well what that has always led to. But also, and apart from that, there is, I think, a deeper reason for the view that democracy alone is capable of solving this problem.

PL. What reason is that?

PH. Nothing but the willing and intelligent help of those who work can ever lead to good work. If they are coerced, they may submit but they will not respond. And if we are to maintain and to increase production we must associate with enterprise the intelligence and the will of all who take part in it.

PL. Yet democracy, you said, is everywhere being set aside, or where it survives, survives only precariously.

PH. Yes. But in none of the new tyrannies have the problems we are discussing been solved, nor do I believe they ever can be by such means. Either these governments will convert themselves into democracies, or they will perish by revolution or by slow decay.

PL. You venture, after all, to prophesy.

PH. Of the fact, but not of the forms, of democracy. There is nothing which I conceive to be final in the democratic institutions

that exist. They may be modified indefinitely. But either they will be modified in such a way as to make democracy more effective, or our societies will perish in tyranny or anarchy. Communities like ours cannot be controlled by a few supermen driving a herd of workers, even if the supermen existed, which in fact they do not.

PL. Let us suppose then, if you like, that reforms, such as you have sketched, have somehow struggled into existence. Everybody I suppose would then have plenty and security, though there need be no absolute equality.

It is a Condition of Success that Wealth should be Increased

PH. I must make another confession. It will be necessary, if that result is to be attained, that wealth should be not merely better distributed but largely increased in quantity.

PL. What! Do you want a society of Sardanapaluses?

PH. No. But neither do I want one of paupers. And that, under present conditions, is the best we could achieve by equalisation.

PL. And how would you realise your purpose?

PH. By that science of nature to which you, dear master, were so indifferent.

PL. I can easily believe, after what you have told me, that, unless it destroys you first, your science may multiply your material goods. But is there not one condition to be observed?

PH. What is that?

PL. That you do not increase your numbers as fast as you increase your wealth. For otherwise you may be running a hopeless race, the goal receding as fast as you advance towards it.

PH. That question too we are beginning, late in the day, to approach, though hardly as yet with the clearness and courage shown by you Greeks. We will speak of that in a moment. Meantime, how does my society now appear to you, so far as we have built it?

PL. To recur to our former metaphor, I now see not a top spinning on its apex, but an imperfect sphere revolving. It is no doubt more stable. But its revolution is maintained by the same whips of greed and need. It is less bad than the other, but I should never call it good.

PH. I suppose, dear master, that we, in these later days, are more disillusioned than you were even in your old age. I at any rate hardly dare to look forward further than that, in any space of time that my eyes can cover.

PL. Good perhaps must be looked for somewhere else than in time. Yet the pursuit of it in time may be the means of realising it elsewhere. We will speak of all that later. Meantime, since you have dealt in

The Problem of Population

your own way with the problem of property and government, we ought, according to your plan, to proceed to the topic of sex and marriage.

PH. We will do so, for we have been led to it naturally by your question about the increase of population.

PL. What have you to say about that?

PH. First I must say that this subject, so familiar to you in Greece, has only very recently begun to interest modern men.

PL. Indeed! And why is that?

PH. There are a great many reasons, most of which you would not easily understand.

PL. Pray forgive my stupidity, and instruct me nevertheless.

PH. Ah, dear master, if you were stupid I should have less shame in betraying our absurdities.

PL. Shame does not become us here. We are observing without passion.

In Marriage Good Offspring is not regarded as the Main Object

PH. Let me begin then with what is least bizarre in our ideas. Marriage, we think, in general, should be determined by property or by love.

PL. Are these alternatives?

PH. Not necessarily. The young are apt to lay stress on love, and the old on property. But if the match is double, love coupling with property, at the same time as youth with maid, then everybody is satisfied.

PL. Where property is private it is natural that it should seem important in this relation; and if love were superadded there could be no objection. But both, I always thought, should be subordinate to the purpose of marriage, which is, to produce good children.

PH. When our attention is called to that point we are apt to reply that, if there is love, good children will follow.

PL. Your science, perhaps, demonstrates the truth of this idea?

PH. Not that I am aware of.

PL. Experience, then, bears it out?

PH. No. Love marriages, so far as we can observe, may produce either good children, or bad, or none at all.

PL. Perhaps, then, this view is a beautiful myth, which happens not to be true?

PH. That would be the most complimentary thing we could say about it.

PL. In that case, it will be one of the myths you will have to combat, as I did so many of ours; that is, if you really do mean to return to earth.

A numerous Offspring is valued in order that the State may be strong in War

PH. Yes, and it is not the only one, nor the worst, bearing on this topic. For instance, many of us think that only one thing is important in marriage—to produce as many children as possible.

PL. For what purpose?

PH. That their country may have more soldiers than any possible enemy.

PL. Regardless of their quality?

PH. Apparently so.

PL. I, too, thought soldiers important, but I wanted them well-bred.

PH. Our mythologists do not seem to think about that. They regard soldiers, good or bad, as useful cannon-fodder.

PL. What may that mean?

PH. I forgot that you are not acquainted with our weapons of war. You might have said, in Greece, food for swords.

PL. And much, indeed, our swords devoured!

PH. Nothing to the meals of our cannon! But I will pass to another myth.

PL. Yes?

Birth Control is regarded as Irreligious

PH. This one is more elaborate, and will seem to you even stranger. It has also more authority, for it rests upon religion.

PL. Tell it me.

PH. Children, it says, once they are conceived, are sent into the world by God. And it would be impious for us to thwart his will.

PL. Does he send the bad as well as the good?

PH. Yes.

PL. And must both alike be born and reared?

PH. Yes, once they are conceived. On the other hand, it would be better that neither should be conceived. For the very act of

sex is a sin, which a good man or woman will avoid.

PL. You, have, then, a religion which, if its precepts were carried out, would bring the human race to an end?

PH. Yes, on earth. But it has a lot elsewhere, which we will not now pursue.

PL. Obviously you must neglect your religion, since you still exist.

PH. Yes; and it connives at our weakness. But only up to a point. It permits and even sanctifies marriage, but it is opposed to any attempt to control its consequences.

PL. One thing, however, it might do. It might select good parents.

We forbid certain Marriages, but not with a view to Good Offspring

PH. It might. And, in fact, it does tell us that we must not marry our grandfathers or grandmothers, or fathers or mothers, or brothers or sisters, or other near relations.

PL. I should not complain of these restrictions, except so far as brothers and sisters are concerned. They used to marry in Egypt, and I never heard that the results were bad.

PH. No. But it was not in that view that the prohibitions were made.

PL. With what object, then?

PH. They were taken over from the rules of an earlier people.

PL. And those rules?

PH. They go back far into the past. No one can say what was in the minds of primitive

peoples. The one thing certain is that it was not either reason or science.

PL. This religion of yours, then, does not help us much in this matter.

PH. No, nor does it wish to. For not only does it hold that it would be better for nobody to be born, but also that, if they are born, it does not really matter whether they are healthy or diseased, strong or weak, beautiful or ugly.

Religion conceives the Soul to be so important that the Body does not matter

PL. Is it possible?

PH. Yes, and also logical. For, as we are taught, it is the soul not the body that matters, and there is no relation, in point of goodness or badness, between bodies and souls.

PL. Do you mean that an imbecile may also be a saint, or a weakling a hero?

PH. Yes, that is the view.

PL. But is it true?

PH. Possibly, in a case here and there. We have had poets, for instance, who were cripples.

PL. I should not myself be opposed to the extinction of those.

PH. Philosophers, then.

PL. They too might go, unless they were the right kind. And the right kind, I think, would be as fit in body as in mind.

PH. Yours, of course, were to have been so. But at any rate this idea, or this fact, so

far as it may be one, is used by opponents to discredit the policy of good breeding. For if such plans as yours had been adopted, they say, they might have prevented the birth of a poet or a philosopher.

PL. Let us grant that they might. But if they had also prevented that of imbeciles and cripples, might it not have been worth while?

PH. I think it would.

PL. Have you any other myths standing in our path to prevent our approach to this subject?

The Discussion begins

PH. I think these are all we need consider now.

PL. Shall we proceed, then, to the argument itself?

PH. By all means.

The Question of Numbers

PL. And shall we divide it up, as far as we can, discussing first the limitation of numbers and then the selection of quality?

PH. By all means. But I must warn you that our results are likely to be very few.

PL. Let us at least reach them, such as they are.

PH. Beginning, then, with number, I will first remind you how different is our problem from yours in Greece.

PL. In what respects?

PH. Your cities counted their hundreds where our states count their millions.

PL. So I understand.

PH. Also, when you tried to solve the problem,

you began by isolating your imaginary city from all others. You then supposed that, as a general rule, every family would have only two children, so that the population would remain stationary. Those who had more than two would hand them over to those who had less. But in case this arrangement should break down, it would always be possible to send out the superfluous numbers as emigrants.

PL. That was my plan.

PH. Whether or no such an arrangement might have been possible in Greece we need not discuss. But our states offer no opportunities for it. They are inter-connected by innumerable links, and population flows perpetually from one into another.

PL. That makes your problem difficult, if not insoluble.

PH. Yes. And there is another point yet more important. You conceived a stationary society, very small and always the same, revolving, like the planets round the sun, in a perfect and immutable cycle.

PL. That was what I desired.

PH. But our communities do not move in cycles at all. Rather the whole human race, as we observe it, rushes like a comet through the sky, and no one can predict where it will be a few years hence, nor whether it will be at all. Within it lie

the knots and clumps we call states; but these, though distinguishable, are for ever disrupting and fusing. They push and pull one another, they interchange their substances. All is motion and energy, though there is little light.

PL. And in this uncharted mass of dark fire, you would propose, like a god, to intervene?

PH. Not like a god, but very much like a man, fumbling, uncertain and tentative.

PL. Tell me, then, your fumblings.

PH. They are not even mine, but those of wiser men. Their fumbling begins with that part of our anarchy which seems most amenable to our science.

PL. Do you mean that curious science of wealth of which you spoke?

The Optimum Number

PH. Yes. It has been suggested that it might be possible to ascertain what number of workers, in any given time and place, might produce the largest output of wealth.

PL. Would not the largest number always produce more?

PH. Not necessarily. It might be smaller than that now existing.

PL. I will not ask why. No doubt your science would have the answer, if it has achieved the calculation. But has it?

PH. No. For our methods of production are always changing, like everything else. If

we could fix them, then we might fix also this perfect number. Meantime, it remains as mysterious as the famous one in your *Republic*.

PL. What then will you do?

PH. In default of accurate knowledge, it still seems to us clear that many of our states have now too many people, and that that is one reason of their poverty. We think, therefore, those of us who try to think at all, that their numbers should be reduced.

PL. And what say those who do not try to think?

Increase of Population as a Cause of War

PH. Oh, they have quite other remedies to propose.

PL. Such as?

PH. "Our territory is too small," they say. "Very well! Then we must take someone else's."

PL. That territory, I presume, being too big for the people who already occupy it?

PH. That does not follow.

PL. How, then, will those who take it be the better off?

PH. They may take the wealth, if they do not populate the land. Anyhow, they expect, one way or another, to exploit the conquered for their own advantage.

PL. This idea must be a chronic cause of war among you.

PH. Yes. But it involves a curious contradic-

tion. We have too many people, they say; therefore we must conquer someone else's territory. But to do that we must have more people still, in order to be sure of conquering. So that an excess of population becomes a reason why the excess should be multiplied.

PL. An interesting piece of logic. But you, who would prefer to reduce the population, how would you proceed? By abortion, or infanticide, or how?

PH. Those rough remedies are still adopted in many parts of the world. But we have discovered a better plan, and one unknown to you.

The Prevention of Conception

PL. What is that?

PH. We know how to prevent conception.

PL. Without interfering with the sexual act?

PH. Yes.

PL. That does, indeed, open new prospects!

PH. Does it not? I have sometimes thought it the most important of all our discoveries.

PL. And is this knowledge generally known and practised?

PH. It is becoming daily better known.

PL. With the result that your populations are declining?

PH. In many countries they are at least reducing their rate of increase.

PL. What you think desirable, then, is, in fact, occurring?

PH. Yes. But it is not always thought desirable.

PL. Why not?

PH. It is objected that the better stocks decrease faster than the worse.

The Objection that the Better Stocks may Decrease and the Worse Increase

PL. Why so?

PH. Because it is among the peoples that we consider the more civilised that this knowledge and practice spreads the fastest.

PL. I understand. We cannot, then, after all, get very far with quantity, without being landed in quality.

PH. It seems not.

The Problem of Quality

PL. Let us then proceed to quality.

PH. There are two points raised by those who object to reducing population. First, they say that the worser nations will increase faster than the better; and then, that within each nation the better classes will be outstripped by the worser. Shall we take the first point first?

The meaning attached to "Better" or "Worse"

PL. Yes. But may I ask, to begin with, in this connexion, what these words, better and worse, mean.

PH. How determined you are, dear master, to lure me on to your favourite field! I cannot avoid it altogether, but I shall begin by skirting it gingerly. We are concerned here, for the moment, not with the question which peoples are really the best, but with the ideas that are held on this subject.

PL. And what are those?

PH. Every nation thinks itself the best, its friends and allies the next best, and its enemies the worst.

White Men versus Coloured

PL. It was the same in Greece.

PH. That is not the only point of likeness between you and us. You distinguished between Hellenes and barbarians. In the same way we distinguish between white men and coloured.

PL. The coloured being the barbarian?

PH. Yes, save for one doubtful exception.

PL. Which is that?

PH. The name does not matter. It is a people which has made itself so efficient in war and so ingenious in commerce that the whites find it hard to deny it the title of civilised.

PL. I understand. Proceed.

PH. As between the various nations of white men, though they are continually at war, the question of quality is not considered very important, for all alike, being white, are thought to be of sufficiently equal value; the only important point is their relative numbers. But as between white and coloured the position is different. For there, not only are the numbers of the coloured dangerously large, but also their quality is inferior. If, therefore, the whites take to diminishing their numbers while the

coloured do not, the quality of population throughout the whole world will decline.

PL. A terrible prospect!

PH. Is it not? For that reason patriotic people among the whites are opposed to any restriction of their numbers, and urge, instead, a continual increase, in order to meet the increase of the coloured.

PL. But are not the coloured also restricting their numbers?

PH. Apparently not; or not soon and fast enough.

PL. And what have you to say in answer to this objection?

If there is Danger the White Men are responsible for it

PH. If there really is such a danger, the white men have brought it on themselves. For their superior intelligence and knowledge would suffice by itself to ensure their predominance, whatever the numbers they encountered, as has been shown over and over again. If there is danger now, it is due to something else.

PL. To what, then?

PH. To a lack of enlightenment in their pursuit of self-interest.

PL. How so?

PH. Their cupidity is greater than their wisdom. They are so anxious to get richer and richer that they sell all over the world their machinery both of creation and of destruction. In this way they do indeed

make the wars of these inferior peoples more prolonged and ruinous than they would otherwise be, and that they may count to be a gain. But at the same time they are providing them both with the experience and the weapons which may be turned, in the end, against those who furnished them. Further, by exporting their money and tools, they are enabling the coloured peoples to develop their own resources, so that, though what they aim at is to get richer themselves, yet in the end they may make the others richer. Thus superior numbers may come to mean, what they do not yet, superior power and wealth, and the danger anticipated become a real one.

PL. If that occurs, it will be a good example of what we called in Greece nemesis. But how does all this bear on your argument? For you seem to be justifying rather than allaying the fears of your opponents.

PH. Yes. Nor would it serve our purpose to tell them, what is self-evident, that the best way to arrest the evil they fear is to check the aggression that has caused it. But there is one point of great importance which they seem to overlook.

Moreover the Danger is likely to Correct Itself

PL. What is that?

PH. The changes they are introducing among these peoples whom they call barbarous

are likely to be more radical than they imagine. Not only will they make them richer and stronger, they will also uproot their most ancient and cherished customs, and among them those which favour a large production of male children. Along with the other arts invented by the whites there will enter also that whereby births can be reduced without check to sexual intercourse; and that, among them as among us, will check the increase of their population.

PL. Yet if, as I understand to be the case, they are already much more numerous than the whites, they will remain so, even if both alike should diminish their rate of increase. And so the coloured, combined together, will have the advantage in war.

PH. But why should they combine? As they become civilised they will adopt the customs of civilisation; and none is more deeply rooted than that of making alliances without regard to anything but self-interest. Of that we have proof. For that coloured nation which, as I said, has proved its capacity for civilisation by becoming a great armed power, shortly after attaining that elevation became the ally of my own country against another white nation. And at the present moment

it is making war against a people of its own colour which, in turn, is defended by a white ally. It is impossible to foresee what may occur on these lines; and if it were possible to check the increase of one of these coloured races, it might turn out that precisely that one was required as an ally by one of the superior peoples.

PL. To me, who am not acquainted with your sciences, these arguments and predictions seem a little wild.

PH. They are, dear master, they are! But the absurd can only be met with the absurd. I find my opponents bobbing up and down in a marsh of hypotheses, and I can only bob with them.

PL. You do not then take seriously the arguments you have been advancing and refuting?

PH. How could one?

PL. Nor yet the main assumption, that white men are better than coloured?

PH. They are perhaps more intelligent and, for the moment, certainly stronger. As to other qualities there would be much to be said, and all inconclusive. The proved superiority of the whites is solely in their cunning and strength; and before long the balance there may shift.

PL. It does not appear, I conclude, that reasonable and instructed men would

think one nation so clearly and evidently better than another that the increase or diminution of births in this or that stock need cause alarm. Let us, then, neglect this set of arguments against the control of births, and procced, next, to consider whether, within one of your states called civilised, the distinction of classes offers a bar to such rcform.

PH. By all means.

PL. What, then, are the arguments here advanced?

Are the Rich of better stock than the Poor?

PH. It is urged that those who are well-to-do are broadly of better quality than those who are poor, and that the diminution of their number in comparison with that of the others would be disastrous.

PL. What is the standard of good and evil here?

PH. That of pecuniary success. Generally, the rich are held to be of better stock than the others.

PL. For what reason?

PH. They have the qualities which enable a man to earn a good salary, and to spend it well.

PL. "Good?" "Well?"

PH. "Good" in this connexion means "large."

PL. And "well," I conclude, "largely?"

PH. No, "well" means, rather, "economically."

PL. And "cconomically?"

PH. A man is economic who does not spend more on anything than—well, than he should.

PL. I will not press you, in the manner of Socrates. But perhaps you can tell me, more particularly, what qualities these large-incomed and economic men possess?

The Qualities attributed to the Rich

PH. I have seen them enumerated as forethought, industry, ambition, tractability, self-control, and push.

PL. Forethought, industry, tractability, self-control, all those I would agree to be good. But ambition is more doubtful, for it may lead either to the greatest evil or the greatest good.

PH. In the case we are concerned with, it leads to making money.

PL. Whether that is good might lead us far. And the final quality, push?

PH. That is the master-one of all. For it causes a man to devote all the others to accumulating wealth.

PL. One might say, then, that, in this view, the good man is one who, having certain virtues, uses them in the pursuit of wealth?

PH. Yes.

PL. Those who attain wealth in this way are not, however, the same as those who possess it?

PH. You mean?

PL. I was recalling all you told me about

property in your society. The bulk of it, you said, passes by inheritance to people who have not done anything to earn it.

PH. That is true. But those who grow rich in that way, it is said, are, after all, a small minority; and if they have not the personal ability to hold on to their wealth they will lose it very soon.

PL. Are we to add then to the good qualities the power of holding on?

PH. Perhaps we should.

PL. Again—I hope I am not tedious—a great deal of your wealth, as I understood, was acquired by gambling?

PH. Yes. But you will remember also that a good many of the gamblers were the same people as those who make large salaries.

PL. May we add then to the good qualities that of being good at gambling?

PH. Hardly, for many of the people of whom we are speaking would certainly not be that. They entrust their gambling business to professionals.

PL. And are these professionals also among the good?

PH. Very often they are, according to the standard we are taking.

PL. But not always?

PH. Some of them, and those the wealthiest, I should hesitate to include. They are

those whose whole business is gambling not for others but for themselves.

PL. Why would you exclude them?

PH. Because they seem to be devoid of many of the qualities we are calling good.

PL. Of which? Have they, for instance, no forethought?

PH. Forethought of a kind they must have, since it is their business to know beforehand what shares are likely to rise and what to fall. Still they do, in fact, make great mistakes even in that; only, a mistake one way is often compensated by an opposite one.

PL. Have they industry?

PH. Hardly. They are often incapable of continuous work. Their quality is rather audacity—the one you used to distinguish from courage.

PL. That, I agree, is no more a virtue than a vice. Are they tractable?

PH. They have a kind of hail-fellow-well-met manner, which enables them to become friendly with disreputable characters.

PL. And self-control?

PH. That is the last thing they possess. We may regard them as a kind of pirates sailing the seas of finance, and taking toll of honest and industrious men. Usually they slip through the net of our loose and pliant laws. But every now and again

they are caught, and landed safely in prison.

PL. These, then, we will exclude from the good, along with artists and poets and philosophers and many others. There will remain the bulk of the well-to-do, men who are both doing work and being paid for it, and also being gambled for by those professionals who have like qualities with themselves. All these we are to call good?

PH. Yes. But we ought to add certain physical qualities.

PL. Such as?

PH. Health, and strength and good looks.

PL. A good addition! And do most of them possess these qualities?

PH. A good proportion, I should say, do, though certainly some of the most eminent do not. But generally, their bodies have a better chance than those of the poor, since they are better fed and housed and trained. Many of them are handsome, at any rate in their youth, and they have probably to start with, sounder health. But they have one great drawback.

PL. What is that?

PH. Their instinct for reproduction is said to be defective.

PL. A serious defect, if it is precisely they whose numbers it is desirable to increase.

PH. Very serious.

PL. Perhaps, however, things may not look so bad if we turn now to the other side of our question.

PH. You mean?

PL. The well-to-do, you have explained, broadly and on the whole, may be said to possess the kind of qualities which are thought in your societies to be desirable. But you have also to show that the poor do not possess them.

PH. That, it is commonly said, follows of itself. For those who have the requisite qualities are always rising to the top, like cream, and the rest sinking to the bottom.

PL. Do you agree with that?

If the good, so defined, are to rise automatically to the top, there ought to be equalisation of opportunity

PH. In part. But there is an important qualification to be made. The handicaps I described to you earlier distort the result; so that in any generation, many are born at the top who would have no capacity to get there of themselves, and many remain at the bottom who might have risen had there been more equal opportunity.

PL. Well?

PH. It follows that equalisation of opportunity would bring to the top those who have the best natural gifts for rising and leave at the bottom those who are not so well endowed.

PL. I suppose, then, that those of the well-to-

do who believe in birth-control must also favour such equalisation of opportunity?

PH. Not at all! They are generally strongly opposed to it.

PL. Indeed!

PH. Yes; for they are more afraid that they themselves, or their children, might sink in the social scale, than desirous that the scale shall really correspond to the qualities they maintain that it represents.

PL. How then do they propose to proceed in this matter of the control of births?

PH. I do not well know. Nor, I think, do they. Sometimes they play with the idea of giving their own families assistance from the state, in order that they might afford to produce more children.

PL. While denying, I presume, such assistance to the poor?

PH. The poor, they complain, already have too much of it.

PL. They would then deprive them of what they have?

PH. That they hardly dare advocate, nor indeed the other. For it would look too undemocratic to spend public money in order to make the rich even better off than they are relatively to the poor.

PL. Your case, as I see it, does not seem a very hopeful one.

PH. Yet, as I said before, I have hope. I think

that it may be possible for the rich to acquiesce in such measures as would make position in the social scale correspond to the kind of abilities we have been discussing, if only the process was not too rapid and gave them time to adjust themselves.

PL. I remember your hope. Let us suppose it fulfilled. There would then be, as I understand you, a society more or less accurately graded in wealth, according to the qualities efficient in producing wealth. Would you then propose to begin reducing, on a similar scale, the births, so that there should be few, or perhaps none, at the bottom, a balance in the middle, say two to a family, and a larger number at the top?

PH. That, dear master, is the road the argument would lead us to take. But I, who am timid compared to you, aiming at no ideal, but only at something slightly better than what exists, dare not embark upon that gallant logic.

PL. What is your hope, then?

PH. As the knowledge of which I spoke for preventing births spreads more and more downwards, I expect to see the excess of births among the poorer classes diminish, and that will lessen the present discrimination in their favour.

PL. And is that all?

PH. Not quite. In one point I think our society might, and perhaps will, be more venturesome.

PL. What is that?

The Defective Stocks

PH. There lies always at the bottom a lees of inferior stock, unfit for either men or gods to drink. And it is just these who are least likely to limit their births, since they are incapable of forethought or public spirit. They are animals spoilt rather than men imperfect, and like animals they breed promiscuously; but their offspring do not perish, as do those of animals, when they are unfit. They survive and in turn propagate their kind. So that these worst stocks would continue to increase even if all the others should limit their numbers.

PL. Such offspring, in Greece, would have been extinguished, if ever they had come to be born.

PH. Yes. But our societies do not permit infanticide, and the people we are concerned with could never exercise the self-control required either for preventing conception or for procuring abortion.

PL. What then can you do?

PH. Here, too, we might be helped by our science. For we have discovered a surgical operation which will make impossible the

procreation or conception of children, without interfering with the sexual act.

PL. You are clever indeed! And this operation, I suppose, you would compulsorily perform upon the people in question?

PH. If public opinion would allow it. I do not know whether it will.

PL. Yet, if it does not, the danger is great.

PH. There is only one other alternative. We should have to shut these people up and prevent them from having sexual intercourse.

PL. Would that be a kindness? Would it not be better to put them out of the world?

PH. It might, but they would not think so; and we shrink from permitting such measures, lest they should be extended further and further into regions whither we never intended them to pass.

PL. You see how hard it is to do one thing well unless everything else is good.

PH. It is hard indeed! Much harder than to construct an ideal state in the void. Yet it must be attempted.

Survey and Criticism of Results

PL. Let us see then how things look. You are contemplating a better proportion than now exists between productive work and the possession of wealth. You suppose also a general extension of the voluntary prevention of births, except among your

poorest and worst stocks; and those you propose either to sterilise or to shut up. In that way you would hope to adjust population more closely to means of production. These measures further, you hope, may extend throughout the world, so that there will be no swamping of white people by coloured. If all this could be done, you would have both a better breed and a higher level of wealth than you have now. That is the picture, is it not?

PH. Yes. What do you think of it?

PL. It looks to me neither white, like my ideal city, nor black, like your present societies. At the very best, I could only call it grey.

PH. Grey would be better than black.

PL. Yes. But consider! We have made no provision in this society for any kind of person except hard-working and efficient producers of wealth.

PH. Say rather, for the kind of men capable of such work. But the same men, if need arose, might turn the same gifts to other tasks requiring efficiency. They might, for instance, make good soldiers.

PL. We have not yet discussed the question of soldiers. We will come to that later.

PH. What other kind of men, then, would you desire? Philosophers, I suppose?

PL. In my sense of philosophy, yes. I am unrepentant there. But leaving that aside, what you yourself say you would most need is men of science, since such perfection as your society can achieve is only possible by their help.

PH. Yes.

PL. And do you suggest that the kind of men for whom you propose to breed would be, or might be, also good at science?

PH. They might, I should say, or they might not. We are not breeding for science, but neither are we breeding it out.

PL. You are leaving to chance, then, what is most important.

PH. Yes. But that is because of our ignorance. We do not know what are the conditions for producing that kind of man.

PL. Would it not be better then to devote your science to finding out?

PH. I should be in favour of doing so. But if we began to breed for scientists we should have to be careful that they should also be men of humanity and common sense, and therefore unwilling to devote their discoveries to destruction. And that makes the problem even more difficult.

PL. And even more important.

PH. True. And since we are talking of what would be desirable, in advance of what seems in any near future to be practicable,

I should wish also, in spite of your famous veto, to breed for some sprinkling at any rate of artists and poets.

PL. In a society such as you contemplate, they might be a consoling leaven. My veto applied only to my own Republic.

PH. Thank you. But though I agree that these people would be desirable, I have not much idea that we are likely soon to know how to breed for them. And even if we did, what chance is there that artists, of all people in the world, would ever be induced to choose their mates with a view to producing good children?

PL. Since you rule out compulsion, I do not know how to answer that. For if your artists are like ours were, forethought and public spirit are the last things to be expected from them.

PH. I agree. We must treat them as singing birds, whom we shall welcome if they come along, but whom we cannot hope either to breed or to put into cages.

PL. Let us then leave your stock as you have described it, and think ourselves fortunate if we can get even that much of good. All the more important will it be to consider what we might do by education to supplement their native qualities.

PH. Yes. And so we come to the third of your fundamental institutions.

Transition to War. Why Plato's Republic was conceived on Military Lines

PL. Before doing that I should like to return to a point which we have barely touched upon. You explained how the growth of population becomes among you a cause of war. War, then, I suppose, for that and other reasons, plays as great a part among you as it did among us?

PH. Far greater, I should say. In any case it is much more destructive, though it was bad enough in Greece. And that reminds me, I have never understood why, when you were planning an ideal city, you made all its institutions turn upon military training.

PL. The young men, if I remember rightly, forced my hand. For when I proposed a life of Arcadian innocence,—the people, after they had satisfied their simplest wants, giving themselves up to singing and dancing and never even quarrelling, much less going to war—when I drew this picture the boys protested that such a life would be one of mere pigs, and that they must have not only food and drink and shelter, innocent amusements and pure religion, but also couches and tables, shoes and fine clothes, dainty cooking and therefore physicians, pictures and plays, poets and dancers, and mistresses—in fact everything which they called civilised. And I could only reply that, in that case,

my citizens would have to wage war in order to steal from others the luxuries which their own territory would not produce in sufficiency.

PH. You were certainly right, as all experience shows, in regarding cupidity as the main cause of war. And, no doubt, if your idyll had not been destroyed, by its own desires, from within, it would have been ruined by aggression from without. For there actually have been peoples, up to quite recent times, who were as simple and innocent as you pictured yours; but we, finding them out, have brought to them war, disease, clothes, work and all the rest of our benefits, so that now if they are not exterminated physically they are morally ruined. But what puzzles me still about your Republic is, that having seen both the root of war and its consequences, you nevertheless thought you could build on such foundations.

PL. Being driven to military institutions I endeavoured at least, by education and discipline, to make them compatible with noble citizenship.

PH. Yet you surely must have reflected that war would destroy the discipline militarism engendered. Consider, for example, what war and conquest made of Sparta.

PL. I always condemned Sparta for laying all

the stress on military training and none on philosophy.

PH. Well, we will not pursue that theme, for our subject is war, as we now wage it. And about this I have a confession to make.

PL. Yes?

Modern War

PH. We have, as you know, by pursuing the kind of knowledge which you disapproved, obtained powers over nature which you never even imagined.

PL. So I understand.

PH. But these powers can be as easily put to bad uses as good.

PL. I well believe it.

PH. And in war, they are in fact put to uses so bad that it has become questionable whether science will not destroy civilisation before it can recreate it.

PL. Please explain further what it is that your science has done for war.

PH. It has removed the whole issue of victory or defeat from hand-to-hand battle, where personal prowess, courage and resource are all-important, to wealth, numbers, organisation, ruthlessness, and above all skill in the invention and use of machines. Our soldiers now do nothing but operate these and be operated upon by them.

PL. And these machines, what are they like?

PH. I need not describe them in detail. It will be enough to say that, by land and sea and air, they fling perpetually a rain of iron projectiles that blow into pieces everything they can reach—fortresses, cities, ships and living things of every kind that come within their range. Meantime, the fighting men are cowering in holes in the ground, waiting impotent and passive until a lucky hit shall send them flying in fragments into the air; or else, emerging from their hiding places and advancing openly, they are mowed down in heaps by hundreds and thousands, until, at last, since there are always more and more of them to be thrown into the cauldron of death, they reach the enemy's coverts, and after immense slaughter take a few miles of their labyrinth. A few weeks later this is retaken by similar means at similar cost. And so the battle rages for weeks, months, years, indecisive and apparently undecidable. Meantime, out at sea, other men, screwed down in submarine craft, are discharging sharp rams of steel into vessels travelling on the surface. Hundreds and thousands perish in this way without a chance of defending themselves; and what is more important, all merchandise, all engines of war, and especially all food destined for the

enemy, are sunk into the sea. Other projectiles meantime are falling in showers from the air upon the huge cities we have described, destroying alike men, women and children. The airmen themselves do not even see, much less consider, what they are doing, but fly off unscathed after completing their massacre; unless, as sometimes happens, they are brought down themselves by the skill of the enemy, and fall from their airy eminence in charred heaps to the ground. But all this that is going on by land and from the air does but little to bring a war to its end. That, it is recognised, can best be done by cutting off the enemy's food, in the way we have described, upon the sea; and in fact the last war, as our sailors boast, was ended in this way by them; since though they did not win victories at sea, for the navies seldom engaged, they could and did wear down, by hunger and disease, the old men and women and children of the enemy's country.

PL. These are indeed remarkable results of your science, your education and your political institutions.

PH. Are they not? And yet we are hardly at the beginning. For our men of science, who are nothing if not patriotic, are working day and night, year in and year

out, to increase the power and subtlety of our engines of destruction; and the next war, it is expected, will be fought principally, if not wholly, in the air, whence enormous masses of deadly poison will be discharged on the civilian population. Women and children, whom our conventions hitherto have pretended to respect, will be now a principal object of attack, and they will have no adequate means of defence. For though underground refuges are already being prepared in secret to receive them, and though whole populations may take shelter in these, yet we are assured, means will be found to penetrate the deepest holes with the most inescapable poison fumes. Meantime, everything that still lies above the ground will be smashed to atoms, while at sea no vessel will be able to live; till in the end perhaps nothing will be left except heaps of blackened ruins, haunted by the skeleton shapes of a few maniacal survivors.

PL. If indeed you are not exaggerating the power of your inventions that might seem the best end that could come to a race so incurably foolish and base.

PH. It might seem so. But the paradox is that these same men who are thus preparing their own destruction, are no worse, perhaps even better, than were your Greeks.

PL. The behaviour you describe does not suggest it.

PH. It does not. But nevertheless, I think that what I say is true.

PL. Pray explain how and why.

PH. That is not easy.

PL. Nevertheless try.

Why War, nevertheless, is not unpopular

PH. The reason at bottom is the one from which all evil springs, that men are not rational, and do not even want to be so.

The Ex-soldier

PL. My own experience convinced me of that, and yours more than confirms it. But tell me, more particularly, how that affects the present issue. Those, to begin with, who actually fought in your war and survived it, they surely can have no illusions left?

PH. Some of them have not, and these, by describing what really happened, are beginning to make some little impression on the rest. But a large number, even of those who once knew, neither choose nor are able to remember.

PL. Not able?

PH. No, for nothing is more deceitful than memory. It has a trick of covering up the past, as ivy does a ruin, shrouding it in beauty which is all the more alluring for the horrors it witnessed in its prime. Many men, perhaps most, who went through

the war, recall it now with a kind of affectionate solicitude.

PL. Is it possible?

PH. Yes. And, to understand that, we must remember how dull, monotonous and unenterprising many of them find their ordinary life. By contrast they may easily come to think that even war was better, though, once they were in war, they would begin to idealise peace. And if this is true even of the wealthier classes who, as we saw, monopolise all the most interesting work, how much more is it true of the great mass, who suffer at best from tedious toil of the kind we have described, and at worst are not sure even of that. To them it may easily seem better to be fed and clothed as soldiers, especially in time of peace, when pretty girls admire their uniform, than to run the chance of starvation with nothing to alleviate its pangs.

PL. These reasons are indeed intelligible enough, however little to the credit of your society.

PH. Yet there is also a credit side. For many, perhaps most, of our best men experienced during the war a sense of comradeship with their fellow sufferers which they do not, perhaps cannot, recover in time of peace. And that memory overfloods all

others, however terrible, as lightning illuminates the horrors of a shipwreck.

PL. And to recover this feeling they would be willing to plunge again into war?

PH. I do not say that; but when they contrast that experience with any they have in peace, they hardly know which to prefer, and so stand apart, dubious if not indifferent, from that war of the spirit which men must wage if they mean to end wars of the flesh.

PL. You have spoken of those who fought in the war and therefore should know what it was like. But how is it with those who were boys at the time?

The Public-school Boys

PH. That is hard to say But war, among them too, has its allies.

PL. What allies are those?

PH. We have, in our country, certain institutions which resemble, more than anything else among us, your Sparta. In these places boys are taught to act all together. Individual tastes, and above all individual consciences, are discouraged, and if possible suppressed. To feel and act altogether is thought more important than to feel or act rightly, and to follow a leader to destruction nobler than to take a lonely road to salvation.

PL. Yes, that was Sparta all over, in her strength and her weakness.

PH. For boys so brought up, and it is so that most of our leaders are trained, war may naturally present itself as a great adventure. Some of the more studious, no doubt, and the more intelligent, recover from that training in later life. But the majority, whose education ends with school, retain throughout the school-boy mind. When the call comes they fling themselves headlong into war and regard the man who stands apart, or opposes it, as a kind of traitor, whatever his reasons may be. The old school they cry, the old regiment, the old country, the old empire, no matter whether it is right or wrong; and that call washes out any faint and feeble traces that books or talk may have scribbled on the surface of their minds. They will be brave like their fathers, intolerant like their fathers, unreflective like their fathers, and like their fathers more afraid of standing alone than of anything else that can happen to them in the world.

PL. You see what follows when men have no training in philosophy.

PH. Philosophy! Dear master, you make me smile! As well ask for philosophy from Spartans.

PL. Well, continue. These kind of men, you said, are those who become your leaders?

PH. Yes.

PL. And the others?

The Mass of the Poor

PH. The poor, do you mean? Many of them, too, will join the fighting force, either because they are poor or because it offers, in peace time, an easy sensual life, and in war, as they suppose, a great adventure. And such indeed war is to some of them, who have no imagination, much animal courage and, as it almost seems, a charmed life.

PL. But are there none among these masses who perceive and feel the evil of war?

PH. Some few there are, and many more who are ready to feel it, as soon as it is put before them. But then they are also equally ready to feel the opposite when that is presented.

PL. None, then, who are really convinced?

PH. Yes, some few, as I said, and they are ready to be martyrs in resisting war. But they are countered by others who hate not war, but only war of a certain kind.

PL. Whom do you mean?

PH. You knew them well in Greece. They are those who are as ready to die in waging a war between classes, as in resisting a war between states.

PL. Ah yes, we knew them well in Greece.

PH. These men are the strongest because the

most fanatical and the most ambitious. They fear no consequences to others or to themselves, but are like the arrow shot from the bow, or rather, in our modern language, the shell shot from the gun. Whenever and wherever they get power there is an end to all hope of peace.

PL. The picture you draw of your population is like enough to what I knew in Greece for me to be ready to accept its truth. But all this, if I understand you right, is but the fuel waiting for the spark; and the great question must be whether that will or will not be applied.

PH. Yes, and that again depends upon our leaders.

PL. Who then are they?

PH. First, there are what we call politicians, those who come into power by favour of our crowds. The Politicians

PL. Describe them.

PH. They are varied and particoloured like those who choose them. For since, as I have tried to show, every kind of passion lies latent in our crowds, some can play on one, others on another. Some believe in war, others do not. Some desire peace, others pretend to do so. Some are merely ambitious, some simply bad, some nobly good. For the moment, however, since we are all still licking our wounds and

not yet ready to begin again, no one ventures openly to defend war.

PL. That then should give an advantage to those who are seeking peace.

PH. It does. But the time is short; and the champions of war do but work the harder behind the scenes, the less they dare to come into the open.

PL. Who are these champions?

The Foreign Offices

PH. We have an institution dating from a long past, and powerful by virtue of knowledge and experience.

PL. No bad thing, I should say, in a society like yours.

PH. Yes, if it were rightly directed. But, as you yourself have taught us, those who are wrong are only the more dangerous in proportion as they are instructed and intelligent.

PL. Tell me more about these men.

PH. It is they who direct our policy towards other states. For since they are permanently in office, they have commonly more weight than the political leaders who are always changing.

PL. And what are they like?

PH. They have the kind of intelligence which is most common and most disastrous.

PL. Which kind is this?

PH. That which is based upon the past and incredulous of the future. The experience

through which we have so lately passed, has left them unshaken. It was terrible no doubt, but what of that?—It was also inevitable. We were not at fault, we never are; it is the others who were to blame. And anyhow, fault or no fault, there will always be war, for such is human nature. There must, therefore, always be armies and navies, or whatever the machines may be called which in the future will be used for waging war. These may change, are indeed changing. But the method of security will always be the same.

PL. And what is that?

PH. To be strong enough, by oneself or through alliances, to defeat any likely combination of enemies.

PL. And do those who control policy in all states have the same views?

PH. Yes, except in those which are too small to count.

PL. Everybody, then, on this view, is to be stronger than everybody else?

PH. Just so, and therefore nobody can ever stop piling up armaments.

PL. The policy hardly seems sane.

PH. It is not. But if human nature is mad so must be human action; and, in their view, human nature is mad. For, as they believe, all states, by inevitable com-

pulsion, must be bent for ever and ever on stealing from other states territory and wealth by means of war.

PL. Do these men then look forward, as to a fated thing, to the destruction of mankind?

PH. By no means! For they look only at what they choose to see. They are like men in the desert riding to sack a city, with their eyes so bent upon their object that they fail to see the dust-storm sweeping up to overwhelm them.

PL. I understand. And these men, you say, are everywhere powerful?

PH. Yes; and they have allies even stronger than themselves.

PL. Who are those?

The Soldiers and Sailors

PH. The men who control our armies and navies and all the apparatus of war which we have described.

PL. Are they, too, part of your government?

PH. They are not supposed to be, but in fact they have enormous power, and that based upon the very people who suffer most and gain nothing from war.

PL. How is that?

PH. Power in our societies depends on the consent of the people, since it is exercised by those who can play best upon their passions. And the two strongest of these are fear and pride.

PL. But these soldiers and sailors and the

others must know, better than anyone else, what your kind of war is really like.

PH. They do, and some of them, the more experienced and reflective, would like to stop it if they could. But that is by no means true of all, even among the older; and the younger, in whom ambition is stronger or brains scantier, never think at all, or think in terms of power and prestige. They are like parasites, feeding on the blood of their host, who, however, does not know that he is feeding them and resists the surgeon who desires to cut them out.

PL. The surgeon is always unwelcome.

PH. Yes. And then it must be confessed that these men are sometimes among the most attractive and charming we have, so that women in particular are apt to adore them, whereas their opponents, however sensible, are often drab and ugly and always of necessity argumentative.

PL. As I listen to you a strange image rises in my mind.

PH. Show it to me.

How all this appears to Plato

PL. In India, as I used to hear, they had, and perhaps have still, images of gods three-headed, many-legged and many-handed, every hand piercing and every foot trampling a victim. Such a god, it

seems to me, is this Trinity of yours, the political leader, the deviser of policy, and the military man. There it stands on the frontier, barring the way to the promised land. About it throng the people, wishing indeed to pass by, but hypnotised by the terrific idol. They break into dithyrambic hymns, whirl in wild dances, or rushing right up to it offer their breasts to the innumerable swords. With an inscrutable smile the deity pierces them through and through. Wilder and wilder the orgy grows, till at last the god, discarding even the semblance of human form, rises into the air and thence, in a torrent of fire and hail, lays low the whole swarm of devotees. Then silence, and then again the gathering, the advance, the swords and the trampling feet, the rain of ruin from the sky. And so, are we to say, again and again, and for ever and for ever?

PH. It would not be for long, since the last worshipper would be quickly extinguished. But your image recalls me, I will not say to the facts, for we have been speaking of nothing else, but to the spirit that is beginning to transform them. For idols, after all, are not immortal.

Rudiments of change

PL. And you, as I believe, are one of those who might destroy them. Tell me then,

by what weapons you propose to break this one.

PH. You will remember that, in these days, the whole world is in contact. We have no outer barbarians, as you had, no continents untravelled and unguessed.

PL. I have not forgotten.

PH. Up till the last great war these various countries were grouped in great empires, or if they subsisted precariously as independent communities, that was because they were coveted by more than one Power and could only be annexed by war.

PL. But that war you have had.

PH. Yes, and one result of it has been to divide some of these territories among the victors, while others have been liberated, to be a thorn in the flesh of the vanquished. That is all in the ordinary course of history. But this time there happened also something new.

PL. What was that?

PH. Most of our states have grouped themselves in a new league, not, as has been the case in the past, in order to counter another league, and so prepare the next war, but with a view to abolishing war altogether, and settling disputes by peaceable procedure.

PL. It sounds a little like our own Amphictyonic Council.

PH. And that, you will say, did not stop war in Greece. It did not. Nor can we be sure that ours will stop it in the world. But the fact of its creation is evidence, none the less, of a new impulse dawning at last upon our distracted planet.

PL. And that impulse you hope may grow into a conviction and a habit?

PH. I am not without hope; but more important than hope is will.

PL. And a powerful will it must be, that dare assert itself amid the hostilities, indifferences and confusions which you have been describing.

PH. Yes; but the will, which is the soul, has also created a body, through which to work upon the world of matter.

PL. And that body?

Organised Labour

PH. I will try to explain. The leaders of our great masses have more sense than most of their followers both of the nature and the consequences of war. Even before the last catastrophe they had a world-wide organisation in which they discussed their common affairs, and their common interest in peace.

PL. But that did not stop the war.

PH. No. It failed when the conflagration broke out. So much stronger than the interests of men, than their humanity or their reason, are the instincts they inherit

from an animal past. Still, what has failed once need not fail for ever; and what proved to be but a cobweb then, may grow, before the next war is ripe, into a net strong enough to hold the world together against all the forces that would disrupt it.

PL. Will not these leaders have to be actually in power in all states if they are to succeed in this tremendous task?

PH. Yes, either formally in power, or so effectively strong that no government would dare to precipitate war.

PL. You told me, however, that in some of your states, your governments are now tyrannical.

PH. It is true and these are educating their people deliberately for war.

PL. So then we return to education.

PH. From which you invited me to diverge.

PL. Yes; and even now, before turning thither, I should like to digress further; for I am not yet satisfied that we have reached the bottom of this strange and fearful abyss called war.

Only the Spirit of Martyrs can Conquer the Spirit of War

PH. What more have you in your mind?

PL. I am thinking that, although men seem above all to love life, cherishing it indeed so fanatically that, even when it has lost all value, they will yet prolong it, if they can, to its utmost limit, yet also something

within them warns them that it is worthless, and exists only to be thrown away. And it is in war above all that that instinct takes charge. To be ready to die in ways which few martyrs would dare to face becomes the virtue principally cherished; and that perhaps is why the plain sense talked by those who condemn war seems, to men thus carried out of themselves, no better than a folly or a crime.

PH. Somewhere, perhaps, amid the universal chaos of men's minds, that feeling too does subsist.

PL. And, as I was wanting to suggest, penetrates so deep into life, that nothing that is not deeper can root it out.

PH. What then would be deeper?

PL. The willingness to die in opposing war.

PH. Only the martyr, you think, can prevail against the fanatic?

PL. Something of the kind. For those who can die, even for the poorest reason, are stronger than those who urge them to live for the sake of life.

PH. Martyrdom then, you think, is a more powerful weapon for peace than all the reasoning and instruction in the world?

PL. Do not mistake me. Reason is the chief need of men. But those who would foster it must be as ready to die for it as fanatics are to die for their fanaticism. For the

molten metal that flows in the torrent bed of war will not be quieted, like a swarm of bees, by the sprinkling of a little dust.

PH. My own thoughts, I confess, have strayed along this path. But one thing always holds me back. Martyrs themselves are apt to be as unreasonable as those that martyr them. So that, in inviting the reasonable to martyrdom, you are inviting them also to unreason.

PL. I do not think of martyrdom as unreason.

PH. No, for you have in mind your master Socrates. And he was perhaps the only martyr who preserved to the end his sweet reasonableness. To be a martyr like that would be worth while. But was he really like that? or did you only imagine him so?

PL. My imagination could not have invented anything so beautiful.

PH. And so humorous, so sane and so divinely charitable; so free not only from hypocrisy and hatred, but also from the righteous indignation that clouds even the noblest souls.

PL. Yes, he was all that,—the best and wisest man of my time.

PH. And, as I think, of all times. If one were called upon to be a martyr, it is such a one that I would wish to be. But to whom is that given?

PL. Those who gaze on him with love may

be changed into his likeness. But we will not pursue this matter further. I did but wish to point you down that dark road at the end of which glimmers so strange a light.

Transition to Education

PH. I dare not follow it to its end. So if you have heard enough of war—as I have said more than enough—let us go on at last to education.

PL. By all means. And there too, I suppose you will have much to say in criticism of me.

PH. I am afraid I shall. But that is because I am conceiving a democracy, not a philosophers' city; and therefore I would extend education to everybody, instead of confining it, as you did, to a governing class.

PL. And what would be the character of the education you would give to your wonderful crowd?

PH. To begin with, precisely that kind which you would not have given, even to your philosophers.

PL. And what is that?

Education in Science

PH. Physical science.

PL. So that all alike, and not merely a few, might have the chance of destroying your society in the way you have suggested may happen?

PH. They must have the chance to destroy it, if they are to have the chance of saving

it. I have nothing new to say about that. But the chance of salvation would be greater if everyone were properly instructed than it is now. For it is not the mass of people, but an ambitious or misguided few, who insist on using science to develop the arts of war.

PL. But education, surely, ought to be in morals as well as in science?

PH. I am starting with science because it is, of all subjects, the easiest and the least controversial to teach.

PL. Why so?

PH. Because it rests on the evidence of the senses, and upon processes of the mind which are easily accessible to anyone who has intelligence at all.

PL. In my time, in Athens, I did not find either the evidence of the senses or mental processes easy.

PH. Nor do philosophers now find them easy. But everyone, including philosophers, is in fact always applying both. For the difficulty of both is not their use, but their analysis. Men can experiment, infer and conclude without knowing what those processes mean or imply and they are doing it, all of them, all their lives. Science is merely an intelligent and careful application of common sense.

PL. How eagerly you fence yourself off from

any awkward inquiries my tiresome and critical mind might impose!

PH. Democracy, dear master, will always be like that. If you lived among us now you would have as much to complain of as you did in Athens; but you would find also as good or better sophists and philosophers. Ah, what would I not give to see you among us!

Does Science lead to Anarchy?

PL. That, at least, dear boy, I shall be spared! But let us continue. I will grant you your physical science. But surely, by itself, it would only produce a race of ingenious animals, without any notions of Good and Bad at all, and therefore unable to cohere in any society.

PH. The animals, or some of them, as we have learned to know them, are rather too much social than too little! Indeed, it is to insects that I should go to seek the best model of that order-imposing society which you professed so much to admire.

PL. You turn the tables on me! But please confine yourself to men and tell me further what you mean. For the insects I am content to leave alone.

PH. That is just what we cannot so easily do now. We know too much about them. But all I wanted to say was that men's conduct does not depend, except to a small degree, on their conscious ideas of

Right and Wrong. Their behaviour comes down, for the most part, from generations of animal ancestors, and from men who lived thousands of years ago; and only later, and in a secondary way, is it modified by the habits and thoughts engendered in our own time.

PL. Your physical science, then, will only give new powers to creatures whose morals, if I understand you rightly, are those of insects. Does that prospect fill you with enthusiasm?

PH. At any rate, it answers your point that science might dissolve the social bond.

PL. Let us grant it. But nevertheless, it seems to be true that, if conduct were bad, science would make it worse.

PH. Or, if good, better. But I will not exaggerate my own point. Some changes do, in the course of time, happen to human ideas and ideals, and science has some effect in preparing these.

PL. How so?

PH. By producing, in some minds, a readiness to ask the question "why" about everything, including human institutions.

PL. In so far as that is true, it must lead towards that anarchy with which I was inclined, from the beginning, to credit your society.

PH. Yes, in so far. But that is not so very

far; not so far, indeed, as I would like it to be.

PL. Please be more explicit

PH. As I see the case, it is something like this. Many minds, even those of eminent men of science, perhaps, indeed, especially of those, never apply the method of science except to the special topic with which their inquiries are concerned. On other subjects they let themselves go, in the ordinary social prejudices. For that is a kind of relaxation, like running down hill on wheels after you have been laboriously pushing up.

PL. Science you mean, in such cases, is like a mill stream, dammed off from everything but the mill, and in no danger of overflowing the country?

PH. Yes. And such men will be generally conservative in their political views, and will think also that, because they are men of science, some special sanctity attaches to their prejudices. So that they, at any rate, will not lead us towards anarchy.

PL. Apparently not.

PH On the other hand, there is another class of men, not practitioners of science themselves, but, by its spirit, which is that of free inquiry, set free to criticise, without mercy, a system of society which has not offered to them the opportunities of influ-

ence and power which they think they deserve. These men condemn all institutions, as the others defend them; and it is they who, when or if they get their way, produce the anarchy you fear.

PL. Yes?

PH. But both of these are very small classes. Elsewhere there is, on the one hand, a great mass of ignorance and indifference; and on the other hand, what I think most important, a minority, which may become a majority, of educated people who are sceptical without being revolutionary.

PL. You mean?

PH. That they look critically at social customs and institutions, asking what purpose they serve and ready to hear all that may be reasonably advanced for or against them. When they come to a conclusion they do so on good grounds, and when they seek a remedy they do so disinterestedly and with reasonable care not to produce greater evils, by changes sudden and unprepared, than those they desire to remedy. It is to this class of men that I look to bring science to bear, safely and usefully, upon society.

PL. I understand. But even so, this group of reformers, I must insist, if they are indeed to reform and not destroy, must have a clear and true notion of what is bad and what is good.

Political disputes do not commonly arise from disagreement about ultimate Goods

PH. No doubt. But they do not think that that is the point of difficulty.

PL. What is, then?

PH. The disagreements of people as to who is to have the good things. There is not enough, men think and indeed find, to go round; so those who have want to keep, and those who have not want to take.

PL. That would be the case, no doubt, with wealth, if that is to be called a Good.

PH. Of course, specially with that.

PL. Or with women, when two men each want the same.

PH. Yes, or with territory, when one nation wants that of another.

PL. In my time, it is true, people were always fighting about such things.

PH. And have been ever since. But to my mind, a principal object of education would be to persuade them to settle such disputes in some other way.

PL. There at least we agree. But what kind of education then are you proposing to attain this end?

PH. Nothing I am afraid that you will be likely to approve.

PL. Nevertheless tell me.

PH. As you know, I believe in democracy.

PL. Dear boy, what has that to do with education?

PH. Democracy means, or should mean, free discussion and persuasion.

PL. That would seem to lead to a constant clash of opinions.

PH. No doubt.

PL. And so, I should say, to anarchy.

PH. I prefer anarchy to tyranny, if those were the only alternatives. But about anarchy I have a plea to put in.

PL. What is that?

PH. I have already hinted it.

PL. Expand then!

PH. I will try. All thought in Athens, and in particular your own, assumed that the determining thing in the conduct of men is their conscious rational choice.

PL. Rational? My trouble was that it was irrational.

PH. At any rate choice, and that deliberate. But we, who have a larger survey both in space and in time, are coming to think that choice is the smallest part of what controls us.

PL. What then is the largest?

Biological causes of Conservatism

PH. A long tradition of nature and of habit, coming down to us first from the animals, and then from generations of dead men who nevertheless still live in us. The earliest societies we have been able to examine, so far from thinking and reasoning, acted like ants or bees, without con-

sidering, almost without knowing, what they did. It is slowly and with difficulty that there have emerged from that mass men with individual ideas; and even now most of us are plunged in a kind of corporate slumber.

PL. You surprise me! But even if that be so, what do you conclude?

PH. That the oscillations and disturbances of societies under the impact of conscious ideas are less violent and rapid than used to be supposed. It is as though—may I, once more, use a metaphor?

PL. Pray do.

PH. Let me then compare a society to an animal, let us say a cow in a field, About it swarm continually great clouds of flies, which we will compare to the more active and self-conscious citizens, intelligent or unintelligent, good or bad, but all disturbing and annoying to the creature. It flaps at them, as well as it can, with its tail, and every now and then gets up and moves to another part of the field, which may, by good luck, be just the part the wiser and juster flies want to drive it to, though of course it may be otherwise. But in any case the creature moves, reluctantly enough, and often again returns upon its tracks. Only every now and then, when the flies are

too many and too irritating, does it stampede down a steep place, maybe breaking its leg in the process, and that is what we call revolution. I will not press my image, but you see what I am driving at.

PL. Instability, you would say, is better than immobility?

PH. Yes.

PL. It may indeed be so, in societies like yours. But even if we grant it, the condition of your society does not seem to me very hopeful.

PH. Neither did that of your own in Greece. The difference between us is—forgive me if I am impertinent—that you took refuge, right outside all given facts, in an imaginary republic, one laid up, as you once said, like a pattern in heaven; while I am looking for something better here upon earth. You had a faith in the significance of your ideal, somewhere and somewhen, though where and when grew more doubtful as you grew older. And I too have a faith, less sublime, I admit, but perhaps more reliable.

PL. In what?

PH. That behind all this process we call history, chaotic though it seems, there is an urge driving men, reluctant and obstructive though they be, towards a purpose

which is both their own and that of something greater than they; that a light is beginning fitfully to dawn upon their darkness, the light of knowledge and of truth. I cannot demonstrate my faith to be true; if I could, it would not be faith, but science. But by it I want to live; and it is to make it clearer to myself that I am laying it before you.

Summary

PL. You silence me. For my speculations, as I am constrained to admit, after all you have told me, did indeed hang impotently above the earth, while yours might perhaps be realised, just because they are more modest. I will be content to hope with you, since hope is the virtue of the young; and will ask you only, for my satisfaction, to sum up your conclusions on this subject of education.

PH. They are little enough in bulk, yet I think important in principle. I say that education is of two kinds,—the one capable of sufficient demonstration, which we call specifically science, that which attempts to determine the temporal order of events, and of which the principles can and should be taught to everyone; the other, concerned with values and purposes, about which there is more disagreement, and which, as I think, cannot be taught, both dogmatically and truly, by any religion or

any philosophy, but should be gradually brought to light by free and open discussion, in which bad premises and bad conclusions should conflict with good, in the hope, or rather the faith, that sooner or later the latter will prevail.

PL. You will hardly expect me to approve your idea of education; for, as you know, I held that definite instruction in Good and Evil was essential to preserve a society.

PH. I know. But also you thought that the form of the good society was fixed, and ought, if it could, to be maintained for ever unchanged.

PL. I did.

PH. And I have explained quite frankly that I do not believe in that, but think that both the form of society and men's ideas of Good and Evil are, and should be, continually changing.

PL. I will not return tediously upon my point. But I should like now at last, if you will, to proceed to what really interests me more than the chances, which do not seem to me good, of building a satisfactory society on foundations that are always shifting.

PH. I would rather say foundations that are always being made deeper and wider and stronger.

PL. Well, let it be so. But supposing that to be

done, are there not some Goods, higher than those we have been discussing, which your citizens might pursue, if ever they were really enabled to emerge from the chaos of strife which you have described?

PH. I think there are, and also that my citizens would be more able to pursue them than yours were. For on this point too, if you will allow me, I have criticisms to offer of your republic.

PL. You are very merciless. But I will endeavour to withstand your attack.

Plato's Republic criticised as sacrificing Individuals to the Community

PH. I will not yet advance my principal weapon, that your ideal goods lay in some other world than ours. But even if we confine ourselves to life here, I will point out that you have no Good to offer to those masses of people who, in your city as in my state, must have been producers of goods.

PL. Of what?

PH. Of goods.

PL. Of Goods?

PH. I beg your pardon! Our terminology misled me. We call material objects goods, such as clothes and beds and the like.

PL. A curious use of words!

PH. No doubt. But we will not linger over that. The mass of people, I was saying, both in your city and in my state, are such as make those material things by

means of which men in bodies have to live.

PL. Agreed.

PH. Well, all of those, you seem to have been content to say, must be left to that kind of work, and need not be considered at all, when there is any question of what is really Good.

PL. I admit it. The true Goods I held could only be attained by those who were well born and well educated.

PH. Yes, but even by them, how attained? For no sooner had your philosophers, after long education and training, caught some glimmer of these Goods, than they were to be haled back remorsely to govern the community.

PL. Yes. For that was their task and their duty upon earth.

PH. But it is earth with which we are now concerned. And looking at earth might not a critic say of your republic—indeed many have said it—that it is a stereotyped herd, where no individual is pursuing any real Good, whether philosophy, or science, or art, or love, or even happiness, since the excellence it has is not that of any class or member, but consists entirely in the performance by each part of its own function, in order that the Whole may maintain and perpetuate itself.

PL. That Whole, I argued, would be both beautiful and good.

PH. Yes. But to and for whom or what?

PL. I cannot tell you that, so long as you insist that we shall confine our survey to your earth.

Modern parodies of this View

PH. Let us nevertheless so confine it, as long as we can. So confined, you would perhaps agree that the Goods you held to be absolute, though they are shown for a moment to your philosophers, are shown only to be renounced in the cause of duty.

PL. I agree.

PH. I have a reason for pressing the point. For, in my own time, there has come into vogue a kind of parody of your view. The Whole men say—meaning what we call the State—is the end and the only end. To it individuals, generation after generation, for ever and ever, should be subordinated. They have no purpose or function other than It's.

PL. And It's? What is that?

PH. Itself! Its continued existence and growth in power and extent. To It are attributed qualities often ascribed to Deity. It is jealous; It is revengeful; It is merciless; It is violent; It is, or at least should be, Almighty. To It belong, without reservation, the wealth, the labour, the lives of Its citizens. It is the god, they the per-

petual sacrifice; and their rulers are Its priests.

PL. Is that what men have made of the doctrine that the community is supreme! What close bedfellows are truth and falsehood! But you do not, I hope, accuse me of teaching so preposterous?

The Happiness of the Masses is a real Good

PH. I accuse, if I may say so, the drift of your teaching, whether you intended it or no. And when you accuse me of constructing a state which would be nothing but a happy herd, then I reply, would that be nothing? or something small and negligible? For consider! For the first time in history the mass of men would be free from poverty, oppression and the other manifold evils which misorganisation has always produced; and also from many of the diseases which now afflict us and which themselves are due to ill-feeding, ill-housing and the like, as they were also among you. Moreover, my society would at least have the advantage over yours that it would be free from the scourge of war with all the other evils which, as we have seen, war involves.

PL. How far do you let your imagination roam? Do you assume universal security?

PH. No! For great as may be the power our science may give us over Nature yet still, we must suppose, catastrophes by land

and sea, unforeseen and therefore unprovided against, might overwhelm our citizens. Premature death, too, would continue to surprise and afflict them, even if old age did not involve them, as now, in a long train of disabilities.

PL. Yes. For a greater power than you men can understand or control, governs your planet for purposes you have not yet grasped.

PH. If you like! But even if that be so, most men, I think, would find satisfaction enough in life to care to continue it even to old age, while the young would inherit, generation after generation, that natural joy in living which no anticipation of evil damps or quells. That, indeed, is so even now. How much more then, if avoidable evils should in fact be avoided!

PL. So far as the mass of men is concerned, I will concede your point.

PH. Will you concede also that they will neither need nor desire any theory to justify their attitude? They will not, for instance, calculate pleasures and pains any more than they do now; they will not ask why they go on living; it will just seem to them worth while to go on, because life is interesting and imperative. They will float, quietly or stormily, down to the cataracts of death without fear or

rebellion or indignation. For is not that, even now, the attitude of most of them?

PL. Very likely. I never knew, I think, even when I was on earth, what feelings ignorant minds may have.

PH. We have a proverb "where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise."

PL. And their ignorance, you think, would be bliss?

Goods that are open to most men

PH. I don't know about bliss. But they might at any rate be happier than they are now, and, for that matter, than rarer souls have often been.

PL. No rare soul can or should be happy in your life.

PH. That may be true. But these common souls, as superior people call them, do have now and might have then many things I should call good.

PL. Such as?

PH. Well, all the pleasures of the body.

PL. And the pains.

PH. Possibly. But the pleasures may be greater and the pains less than they are now, when once our science has conquered disease.

PL. And would they have any other Goods besides those of the body?

PH. Oh yes! They have now, and would have then still more, the interest of doing and making things, of talking to one another,

of marrying and bringing up children, of all that common business of life which takes up all the time of most men, and most of the time even of those who are exceptional.

PL. The blind and halt, I dare say, may be happy enough if they do not know that they are blind and halt, and if they do not fall and stumble too often.

Does the opening of such Goods to most men imply that higher Goods may disappear?

PH. Well, I am not claiming more than that for the bulk of the citizens of my state. But I think, as I said, that that would be much. I will even go further and say what may shock you more than anything else.

PL. Truth cannot shock me and error may be refuted.

PH. Many of my friends on earth, at any rate, are shocked and they perhaps the best of men.

PL. What is this terrible confession?

PH. I will come out with it. If I could secure for the great mass of men such a measure of happiness, and could only secure it by sacrificing altogether what are called higher Goods, I would consent to that sacrifice.

PL. Indeed! Let me hope then at least that you are not faced with that alternative.

PH. I do not know that I am, but it is conceivable that I might be. For these higher Goods have been secured, in fact, for the

most part, by leisured men living on the labour of others; and by destroying that class, my friends say, (as I intend and desire to destroy it), I shall destroy also the possibility of achieving any Goods other than those which the mass of men can appreciate; and those I am not pretending are likely to be what are called ideal.

PL. And what have you to say to those who thus accuse you?

PH. I might urge that one of our best philosophers did in fact make his living by a manual trade, as your own Socrates did by sculpture, and that one of our best poets was a ploughman.

PL. And what do your friends reply to that?

PH. That, nevertheless, the greater number of poets and artists and men of science have always been men of leisure freed from the necessity of doing other work.

PL. If you want this class of men, you could perhaps arrange for them to be paid well for their work.

PH. If we could discover them. But that, as I should have to admit, is not easy in a democratic society. We might be merely endowing charlatans.

PL. That, I should say, is likely in a society uneducated in true values, as you seem to admit that yours would be.

PH. At any rate, I can have no certainty that my citizens would be able to distinguish rightly these higher and rarer Goods.

PL. Perhaps, nevertheless, they would not distinguish them worse than most of your citizens do in the societies which you now have?

PH. I doubt whether they would or could. But then, my opponents say, changing their ground, if genius was not starved it might be stifled. For they think that in my society there would be as much regulation as in yours.

PL. By genius, I suppose, you mean what I used to call a divine madness, and I do not see how any society that means to have order at all can make provision either to prevent or foster that. I certainly made no provision for it in my own republic.

PH. No, not for the artists, but you did for the philosophers. And I feel constrained in honour to admit that for them, too, I am not sure that my society would be favourable.

PL. You are candid indeed!

PH. I wish to be. But perhaps I am more candid than I need be. For after all genius is as likely to be born into my society as into any other, and I do not know that mine will make worse provision for it.

PL. In your view, then, the coming into being of these higher Goods is a matter of chance?

PH. It always has been; and often they have disappeared. But hitherto, so far as we know history, they have always emerged again from any eclipse they may have endured.

PL. May we then now, leaving the mass of men in the limbo you have constructed for them, turn at last to examine these rarer Goods? Transition to higher Goods

PH. Yes, let us.

PL. Tell me then first, where do you locate them?

PH. In the minds and the hearts of men.

PL. And nowhere else?

PH. Where else?

PL. They exist, as I thought and think, in some other place, and the men who are capable of perceiving and pursuing them are like flying fish, leaping for a moment into the air but only to fall back again into the sea. For the Goods they seek do not belong to that element where they reside, but to another and a better one.

PH. Unreachable by us?

PL. You say so, not I. For those, I think, who are faithful and fortunate, will reach one day that better place, and there will beautifully float and poise among the flowers towards which, while they were

enclosed in bodies, they could but feebly flutter and fall.

PH. Well, let that be as it may be; and let us meantime try to describe at least what the flowers are.

PL. Begin then.

PH. Nay, that you should do. For it is you, above all, who know such Goods.

PL. Dear boy, you are much mistaken! For what I have seen elsewhere I cannot see here, and what I recall of my thoughts on earth may be irrelevant to you. I can but play the midwife, like my master Socrates.

PH. If you are imitating Socrates, you have not forgotten his irony. But I accept your challenge, since I must, though not without fear. For I have heresies to utter, and of such, in your old age, you were not fond.

PL. Ah forgive, if you can, and forget the stains of Time! From me I hope they have been purged, and you they have hardly touched. Eternity you do not know, but from me too a veil has hidden it, lest in this place I should reveal its secrets. To both of us here there does but glimmer faintly the sun we cannot fully see. But for me the gleam is on a world long past, and for you on your present. Tell me then how the light looks, as it fitfully glances on a scene more vast and chaotic than any I ever knew.

PH. The forms it takes I would still group very much as you did. I would say that the Goods that have value in themselves, and not merely as means, may be classed as Truth and Beauty and Love.

PL. Noble names! But perhaps they do not denote to your mind the same objects that they did to mine.

PH. Some differences there are, and it is those I would like to lay before you.

PL. Do so by all means. Where will you start?

PH. Let us begin with Truth. Truth

PL. Do you call that Good, whatever it may be?

PH. You trip me up at the outset. I should have said the knowledge of Truth.

PL. But will the knowledge of Truth be good, unless Truth is good itself?

PH. I think so, but that perhaps is one of my heresies. For you, I believe, do not agree with me.

PL. The really True, I thought, was also the really Good. The View that the True and the Good are One

PH. Yes, and many have followed you, down to my own time. The phenomenal, you said, and they say after you, is not the real. The real is Good, but the phenomena are either mixed or bad. Entangled in them, all men must suffer and endure as they can; but that, since the endurance and suffering is itself only phenomenal,

does not really matter. That is the kind of view that has gone reverberating down the centuries, a confused and hollow echo of your own voice. Ordinary men and women, those we have left just now in their limbo, bearing what they must and enjoying what they can—they of course have heard nothing of this doctrine, or if they heard have not troubled to attend. But in some form or other it has sung in the ears of philosophers till they could hear no other sound. And poets too, like æolian harps, have caught the sound, and transfused it into a sweet and ravishing music.

PL. But you?

PH. To me, and to my comrades, it sounds no longer like music but like nonsense. This reality we say, may or may not exist, but we know nothing of it save by hearsay or by arguments which seems to us like the dreams of lunatics. But the world called phenomenal, *that*, whatever we think of it, cannot be denied. The most learned philosopher is surer of a toothache than of an argument, and is brought up more surely by a brick wall than by a fallacy.

PL. Yet this world of sense, call it phenomenal or real, is always in flux.

PH. No doubt. But it stays in the same forms, or substantially the same, quite long enough

for us not only to become acquainted with it, but to work upon it. And what we are acquainted with and what we work upon that we regard as reality, all of us in practice, and most of us in theory.

PL. Well, let us proceed on that hypothesis as long as we can. The world of sense, you say, is the real world, and knowledge of that one of the real Goods?

PH. Yes.

PL. But did you not tell me earlier that that knowledge has given you the power to destroy yourselves root and branch, and that in fact there is a danger that you will do so?

PH. As a means, I agree that knowledge may be as much bad as good. But we are talking now of ends, and I think that, as an end, it is good.

PL. It seems paradoxical to maintain that it is good to pursue as an end what, all the time, as a means, may be destroying the creatures who pursue it. For, since we are confining our thoughts to life on earth, we must assume that such destruction would be final, and that nowhere else in the universe would human Good be achieved if there were no men left any longer to pursue it.

PH. I have not said, and I do not think, that the Good is also eternal. It may be as

transitory as a cloud, and yet still good.

PL. That then, let us note, is one of the consequences of confining Good to the things of earth.

PH. Admitted. But we must add that the use of knowledge to destroy, in that final and radical way, though possible, is not probable, still less certain; and we think, even those of us who admit the risk, that it is a risk worth taking. For, as one of our philosophers said, everything noble is dangerous.

Can Knowledge of Evil be in itself a Good?

PL. It does not follow that everything that is dangerous is noble. I will not, however, press that point further. But another objection occurs to me.

PH. What is that?

PL. Do you maintain that the knowledge of Evil is good in itself, even though that knowledge does not help us to remove Evil, either in our own souls or in those of other people?

PH. I don't think we ought to ignore anything.

PL. That depends, does it not, on our reasons for ignoring? We ought not to ignore what may make us better. But you are talking now of knowledge as an end not as a means. And do you really think that simply to know Evil is a Good apart from anything we can do with the knowledge?

Pain, for instance, you would certainly say is a bad thing, and so I too think it, unless it can be used to purify the soul. But surely to know that there is pain, though the knowledge does not help either oneself or anyone else, could not be re-regarded by sane men as good? It would be better, would it not, to be ignorant of it, if one could?

PH. Better, I agree, than to experience it.

PL. But you cannot know it without experiencing it. And even if you could, the mere knowledge of it must be to everyone distasteful, and to imaginative and sensitive people very disagreeable?

PH. I suppose that is true.

PL. Well, what is true of pain will be true also of everything called evil. It is only if the Evil can be converted, by the knowledge of it, into Good, that it can be good to know it. The knowledge cannot be a constituent of the Good in itself?

PH. I suppose not. The truth is that, when I was thinking of knowledge, I had in my mind knowledge of the physical world.

PL. And that you do think good in itself?

PH. Oh yes!

PL. Do please explain to me why.

PH. If only you could come back to earth and see for yourself! For I am too ignorant and tongue-tied to give you more than the

faintest image of what our science has discovered.

PL. You are, at least, less ignorant than I am, and I have not noticed that you are tongue-tied. Try then what you can do.

The Physical Universe

PH. How shall I begin? I will take first those heavenly bodies which, next to mathematics, you thought best worth studying, no doubt because you knew most about them. Yet all that you Greeks knew, remarkable though it was, was as nothing to what is known now. By the help of instruments, unknown and unimaginable to you, we have distinguished and discovered stars of which you never dreamed. We have learned the orbits in which the planets circle round their suns. We know their size, their weight, their temperature, their composition. We can see mountains in the moon and, some say, canals in Mars. And that solid earth of ours which you thought to be the centre of the universe we know to be one of the tiniest of the planets speeding with incredible velocity about the sun, with all its seas and cliffs and all the congregation of its creatures. Yet from this whirling mass the invisible speck called Man looks out into the infinity of space, maps its geography, measures its motions, enumerates its contents. All that alone, dear Plato, if

there were nothing more urgent to do, would suffice to employ for ever the mind and the intelligence and the imagination of the wisest and the noblest men.

PL. How delightful is your enthusiasm! You make me ashamed of my former indifference to studies destined, though I did not know it, to reveal such marvellous facts. Yet still, I think, if I were a denizen of your earth, I should want most to know about the ultimate destiny of men. May I ask how that appears, in the light of this new knowledge?

Man's place in the World

PH. That is the strangest and most impressive thing of all. Men, in this enormous ferment, appear as briefer-lived than the most ephemeral of insects, and frailer than the lightest butterfly. The whole life of their race upon earth is but a moment in the day of the universe, and all their cares and frettings, pains and pleasures, hopes and fears, raise hardly as much as a bubble on the vast ocean of reality.

PL. Impressive indeed! And this huge universe which you are discovering is, no doubt, as significant in value as it is tremendous in extent? Your men of science, no doubt, are hoping, by degrees, to reveal in the universe Goods as much greater than those you have hitherto conceived as space is vaster than your bodies.

PH. I did not say that. We do not know that there is even life elsewhere than on earth, still less any consciousness or thought.

PL. Indeed? But tell me now about time. Is that too as vast in extent as you have found space to be?

PH. It is indeed.

PL. And man perhaps may hope to extend all through its length, though he has no hope of filling all space?

PH. No. It is thought that, though he may endure millions of years, those will be but a drop in the time that was before he appeared and that will be after he has vanished.

PL. He will vanish then. And what will abide?

PH. Nothing at all, it is thought. The world is like a huge clock that is running down. The time it will take to do so must be measured in millenniums not in moments. But the end will come, and there will be left nothing.

PL. If the clock is running down, can you say, at least, who wound it up and why?

PH. No. About such things we think it idle to inquire.

PL. Alas! For if I were among you that would be what I should most want to know. This vast water-clock whose drops are centuries, dropping on, dropping on, and

at every drop nearing the final stoppage, fills me, even where I am, with a cold chill, so that I wonder at the generous enthusiasm with which you contemplate it. But can you not perhaps, even though you know nothing, nor expect to know, about the starting of the clock, tell me at least something more of its mechanism?

PH. Oh yes, much that is even more wonderful than what I have described.

PL. Let me hear then.

The Elements of which the Physical Universe is composed

PH. As we have extended our knowledge into the infinitely great, so we have into the infinitesimally small. You in Greece had hit upon the idea of atoms, but rather as an ingenious speculation than as a demonstrable fact. But we, though we cannot see nor touch nor handle them, know their motions and their forms. They are grouped, we find, in systems, like planets and suns, so that throughout the world the very small recapitulates the very large.

PL. That is wonderful indeed! But one thing puzzles me. These little bodies you say are so tiny that they cannot be perceived by the sense.

PH. No, nor yet by our finest instruments, fine though they be to a degree of which I could give you no conception.

PL. Yet these very tiny bodies are the last reality?

PH. Yes, so far as we know. But indeed they are improperly called bodies. We prefer to call them energies.

Are these Elements, which sense cannot perceive, nevertheless real?

PL. Does not that make rather strange that confidence in the deliverance of the senses which was the starting point of this discussion? For, as I gather, whatever energies may be, they cannot be seen, nor touched, nor smelt, nor tasted.

PH. Naturally not. We have much discussion about that, and much disagreement. Some say that only these ultimate energies are real; others that they are not real at all, but figments of our minds enabling us to predict the movements and operations of things seen and felt and heard, which latter alone are real.

PL. It seems then that this reality of sense is more uncertain than you led me to suppose.

PH. You must remember that the whole conception of invisible energies is derived from the perceptions of the senses, so that if they are not valid, neither is it. The foundation of all is therefore always sense, whatever else sense may lead us to infer.

PL. Would that be incompatible with my old view that sense is a misappearance to us of some reality different from sense?

PH. It might perhaps avoid confusion if we dropped the word reality, since it is so ambiguous. But what I said earlier remains

true. Whatever men may think or imagine or suppose themselves to believe, nothing is more unescapable by them than the sensations of the body, whether they be outward, as of what they call things, or inward, as pain. The more they try to escape from them the more they incur uncertainty, confusion and even madness. On that foundation we may indeed build, but we may never unbuild it, at least while we live and work upon the earth.

Mathematics

PL. But surely there is a kind of knowledge both more accurate and more secure than any that rests upon the senses?

PH. You mean, I suppose, mathematics?

PL. Yes.

PH. I hardly like to speak about that, for I am no mathematician.

PL. If you were, you would, I think, agree that that science is the more perfect the more it is divorced from even the ghost of sense. And the more beautiful too. It is like music without sound.

PH. I cannot but think that music is better with sound.

PL. Mathematicians would not say so.

PH. Perhaps not. I must not speak of what I do not understand.

PL. But mathematics is not the only example of what I am thinking of. Any perfect argument will serve.

Transition to Art

PH. There is, no doubt, a thrill of satisfaction if ever one comes across that rare bird. Still, I must maintain that most men do not think of the good life as one of unceasing ratiocination.

PL. Some men do. My master Socrates said that the best he hoped for, if there were another life, was to spend his time in argument with dead heroes.

PH. Oh yes, dear master! But Socrates, as you well know, was very conscious when he argued, of the beauty of his interlocutors. And even you yourself, for all your love of mathematics and dialectic, when you tried to describe the highest Good spoke always in terms of sense.

PL. Tell me, dear boy, what is it that you are trying to assert?

PH. That when any one really tries to conceive a perfect life he images it, whatever intellectual elements may also be present, as plunged deep in sense, like a sponge in water.

PL. What kind of sense?

PH. Oh, make it as pure and lovely and refined as you like! But still, sense. It is Art, not intellect, that gives us our best experience of Good.

PL. Do you mean by Art what painters and sculptors and poets and musicians produce?

PH. Yes. And let me ask you first—do you still think of them as you did when you were on earth? Art

PL. I have not thought about them at all since I have been where I am, and therefore have had no reason to change my opinion.

PH. Did you dislike them?

PL. I would not say that. I think I liked them too much, and it would have been no pleasure to me to drive them out.

PH. I thought as much. For an artist in words, such as you were, must have had sympathy with his fellow-craftsmen.

PL. I had sympathy, but no approval.

PH. Because you thought artists had no knowledge of the true Good?

PL. And yet were so terribly persuasive in drawing men to the false.

PH. I have often wondered, what did your public think, in that great city of the arts, of this attack upon their high prerogative?

PL. The artists themselves paid little attention, but the rhetoricians and the critics attacked me roundly. I tried once to symbolise the issue in a parable. A Parable

PH. It has not come down to us. Can you remember it?

PL. In outline only. Socrates I supposed had a piece of ground adjacent to another that was owned by a very beautiful prostitute. Socrates grew in his plot wholesome vege-

tables, and she in hers the most lovely flowers; and the dispute was that each accused the other of encroachment, she saying that his vegetables intruded on her flowers, and he the contrary. So the matter came up for trial. She was defended by a famous rhetorician who was also her lover, and he poured forth a wonderful stream of words, dealing not so much with the beauty of her flowers, though of course he made much of that, as with the loveliness of the lady herself; and as she was present in court, for the whole jury to see, he had a very easy case. Socrates, on the other hand, besides being ugly in person, insisted on his method of question and answer, which, as you know, was always exasperating to a plain Athenian. His vegetables, he insisted, were not only wholesome, which was not in dispute, but were really much more beautiful than the flowers; and when this was denied he entangled them in his usual dialectics, showing that they had but the vaguest idea what they meant by the word beauty. They made admissions which were fatal to their argument, as that what was beautiful was also wholesome, which Socrates had no difficulty in refuting out of their own mouths; and they were equally unable to sustain their belief that

the bright and varied colours of flowers were lovelier than the greens and greys of vegetables.

PH. And the end, I suppose, was the usual one—Socrates had the better of the argument, and was fined for his pains?

PL. Precisely.

PH. I have always felt, if I may say so, that I could have put up a much better defence against Socrates than you permitted to your controversialists. At any rate, I shall try to persuade you that Art is good in itself, whereas morals are good only as a means to something else.

PL. How I used to love such discussions! But I wonder if you have anything to say which was not said by my young men in Athens?

PH. Perhaps not. But I have an idea that I can go deeper into the matter than you ever allowed them to do.

PL. The deeper the better. Where will you begin?

Plato's own Account of the Good is more like Art than like Knowledge

PH. By a direct offensive. I repeat first that, clearly, you yourself, when you described what you called the Good, described it as something more like Art than knowledge.

PL. Did I indeed?

PH. Yes; for whenever you tried to express in vivid form the kind of life you thought ultimately good, you escaped from reason

and abstractions into allegory, and your allegory was all in terms of sense. You spoke of souls following, through a spacious heaven, shining gods. And what was a god? To the Greeks, not a pure spirit, whatever that may be, but an inhabitant of a body supremely beautiful to the eye.

PL. In speaking of the unspeakable I was compelled to use metaphor.

PH. Your metaphor, at any rate, expressed what Art can actually do, whether or no some other faculty, in some other state, can do something else. And the contemplation of sensible forms ordered by Art is, I am suggesting, a Good in itself.

PL. Whether or no these forms of sense are themselves good?

PH. Whether or no they are ethically good. Aesthetically good they are by definition.

PL. May we then use some other word than good, such as beautiful?

PH. We can use that word, but it is ambiguous and controversial. I would rather say that the object of Art is such an arrangement of forms and colours, or of words and sounds, as arouses aesthetic satisfaction.

PL. In whom?

Aesthetic satisfaction is indifferent to the Nature of Objects it recalls

PH. In those who have the power of feeling it.

PL. And can this satisfaction be equally well aroused by the representation of objects in themselves ugly and mean?

PH. Certainly. For the quality of the objects, regarded either in themselves or for purposes of utility is irrelevant to the achievement of Art.

PL. The representation of figures or forms commonly called ugly or repulsive or ridiculous, of a broken pot, or a cripple, or of Socrates himself, may arouse this aesthetic satisfaction as much as the portrait of a hero?

PH. Yes. For Art, though it may represent, has in its essence nothing to do with representation.

PL. You perplex me.

PH. Because, as I suppose, you are still under the impression that the business of Art is to imitate. If that were so, it would be true, as you used to maintain, that the original object must be better than the imitation. But in our view it is only by accident that Art, I will not say imitates objects, but reminds us of them. It uses them merely as tools in the process of reaching its own end, which is something quite independent of them. A true connoisseur does not ask whether the objects that suggested a picture or a statue were beautiful or ugly, or mean or noble, nor whether they have been truly reproduced. They are absorbed and transformed in the pattern that makes the work of Art.

PL. I begin to understand. But, if that is so, why deal with objects at all? It seems unnecessary and even cruel to mutilate the poor creatures. Could not artists arrive at their patterns without passing through the medium of things?

PH. They might, conceivably, but they do not seem to be gifted with enough invention. The innumerable forms given in the sensible world suggest to them patterns more interesting and complicated than they could conceive by their unaided imagination.

PL. And that is the only reason why they take objects as their starting point?

PH. I think so.

PL. Perhaps we may return to that later. Meantime, is it not distressing and disturbing, to ordinary men, to see these distortions of objects with which they are familiar in their undistorted form?

PH. Yes, they are very much distressed, or rather annoyed, until they get used to it. And even after they have become used to one kind of distortion, they are equally vexed when they are presented with a different one. For very few men have enough aesthetic perception to recognise a work of Art when they see it. What they see and approve, as a general rule, is what they have been habituated to believe

is Art, not what they really know to be so.

PL. Most men, then, do not really receive what you call the aesthetic satisfaction, even when they are contemplating works of Art? May not men Contract from Art ethical Evil?

PH. No.

PL. But they do contemplate them nevertheless?

PH. Yes.

PL. Well then, to return to the point at which we started, works of Art, to most men, though not to the gifted few, will be imitations of objects, and the best Art may seem to them merely bad imitation. What I urged about Art may therefore be true of ordinary men. If there are objects ethically bad for them to dwell upon, then they will receive that Badness without any compensation from the aesthetic Good?

PH. They might, no doubt.

PL. And even artists, perhaps, are not always functioning as such? Sometimes, I should suppose, they might be concerned with the object itself rather than with the aesthetic pattern made out of it? That might be so, for example, in the painting or sculpture of nude women?

PH. It might.

PL. They might, for example, when they had

finished painting, want to embrace the woman?

PH. I should suppose they often not only want to do so, but do it.

PL. It would seem, then, that my point about the ethical effect of Art is not, after all, so unsound, if in fact both the observation of it by the many who have not this sense of Art, and the contact with its subject by the artist himself, when he has ceased to create, may result in mere sensuality?

PH. Whether or why sensuality is bad we have not yet discussed. But, leaving that aside for the moment, is it not absurd to attribute to Art the sensuality which is inherent in most men? Art may, in some case or other, happen to stimulate it. But far more powerful and continuous is the perpetual stimulus of life itself.

PL. Let us say then, if you like, that to most men—and it is most men of whom a legislator must think—Art will at least do no good, and may do some slight additional harm. That seems to me to be true even of the plastic arts, but still more of those of which, in fact, I used to think most, such as literature and music.

PH. Literature is a very mixed Art, and often not one at all.

Rhetoric

PL. Let me take it, however, where it is one. Let me take, for example, Rhetoric.

PH. Do you call that an Art?

PL. We certainly thought it one in Greece. But you perhaps have, fortunately, lost it?

PH. We have lost it, fortunately or no.

PL. I congratulate you. Among us it was employed more sedulously than any other Art; and it was, one might say, a kind of sculpture in words,—its material ranging from common clay, as in civil cases in the courts, to the finest Parian marble, as in ethical or political discourses; while, whatever the material, the articulations were elaborate and precise, and the surface undulated and flowed, like muscles, in exquisite transitions, and was overlaid with a bright and shifting skin of rainbow words.

PH. I know it well; for even now, after two thousand years, we study in the written text the speeches of your orators.

PL. The written text must be but a pale ghost. But when rhetoric was alive it was by far the most potent of the Arts, since it affected directly not merely the thoughts and feelings but the actions of men. Pericles, for example, by his speeches, involved Athens in the Peloponnesian war.

PH. Never, I suppose, have orators been so powerful as they were among you. But it is just that power that makes me doubt whether rhetoric is really an Art. For Art

does not either urge or dissuade action. It invites to contemplation.

PL. Do I understand then that you abandon Rhetoric to my tender mercies?

PH. I feel no desire to intervene.

Drama

PL. Let us go on then to consider drama.

PH. With that, surely, as you knew it in Greece, you could hardly quarrel?

PL. What! Did not Aristophanes lampoon Socrates?

PH. No doubt. But was Socrates any the worse for it?

PL. Perhaps he was the better, if the lampoon led him to a noble death and a swifter passage to a better world. But the Athenians were the worse, and it is of them that a legislator must think.

PH. Take Aeschylus then. Surely his religion appealed to you?

PL. What? When he showed the highest god torturing Prometheus, because he had brought to mankind the sciences and arts; and Artemis insisting on the murder of an innocent girl, because someone else had killed her favourite stag?

PH. Were not the audience led thereby to form a higher conception of divinity?

PL. By no means; for the dramatists always, in the end, justified the gods.

PH. You cannot say that, at any rate, of Euripides.

PL. He, I agree, was more of a philosopher than the others. Yet even he rather undermined false beliefs than instructed men in the true; and in his very latest drama he seemed even to approve the wild Bacchantes who tore into pieces their wise and humane king.

PH. Nevertheless I would say, from what I know of history, that poets have at least come nearer to truth and good than philosophers.

PL. They may sometimes have done so. But, even when they spoke truth, they did so rather by a lucky chance than out of the fullness of knowledge. And that is why, with sorrow in my heart, I would have escorted them out of my city as doubtful champions and probable corruptors of morals. Such at least were our dramatists in Greece. But you, perhaps, have now a better kind?

PH. We have had dramatists as great or greater than yours, but few, if any (and those not the best), as much concerned with morals and religion. Indeed our greatest playwright concealed so completely whatever he may have thought on such subjects, that everybody attributes to him, with some kind of probability, the opinions he himself holds. He, I fear, would have been one of the first whom you would have

expelled, though there is none, I think, you would have more bitterly regretted.

PL. I could wish to have known him before driving him out. But if he was as you say, he would no doubt have had to go. And the others, do they all resemble him?

PH. Most of them, in their attitude, if not in their genius. We have indeed now among us one who writes plays in order to teach moral and political wisdom, or what he believes to be such, and of him perhaps you might approve, except that you would miss in him the gravity and beauty you admired.

PL. And what effect has this man on your chaotic society?

PH. He adds, I think, to the chaos, for he undermines our traditional beliefs, while those he desires to substitute, people are unwilling to accept. He reminds me indeed more of Euripides than of any other of your dramatists.

PL. Perhaps then, like Euripides, he does not really know the truth?

PH. Like him, he feels after it, though perhaps less earnestly.

PL. Him too then I shall have to expel. But how is it with you in regard to the other forms of poetry?

Lyric Poetry

PH. The lyric poets, for instance?

PL. Take them, if you like. In Greece they

were even worse than the dramatists. Some few there were, in the earlier age, who had an inkling of the great mysteries. But most of them, however lovely and desirable, were as ignorant of Good as the playwrights, and looser in their subjects. Much of our poetry indeed was merely erotic.

PH. You make me smile. There is almost no one among us, and all through history, so far as I know it, who would not say that that is precisely what poetry ought to be.

PL. Your poets then in this respect are like our lyrists?

PH. I wish they were as good! We have however some who deal with morals and religion. But if you could ask them whether they knew the truth, they would reply very doubtfully. They would say, at most, that they were guessing and feeling after it.

PL. It does not seem, in that case, that they would be able to persuade me not to drive them out. Shall we go on now to the last art, music?

PH. Before doing that, let us touch on another, which you had hardly developed, but which is the chief of all among us. Novels

PL. What is that?

PH. The art of story-telling.

PL. We told our stories in verse.

PH. But we tell ours in prose, and they are different from any you had in Greece.

PL. How so?

PH. They deal with the ordinary course of our life, and, above all, with the sexual relations of men and women, such as, courting, marriage, fornication, adultery, and all the rest of it.

PL. Indeed? That is a plague from which, in my time, we were free.

PH. Among us it is endemic; one might say indeed, that, so far as literature is concerned, it is the principal education we give both to men and women. Some of our best brains are devoted to it, and many of our worst.

PL. And are the only subjects of your stories those you have mentioned?

PH. I will not say that. At the present day crime and the pursuit of it takes the first place in our favour. Some of our greater writers have dealt also with war and conspiracy and revolution and kings and courts and I know not what.

PL. And is it the object of the writers to tell the truth about all these topics?

PH. The object of most of them is to make money by selling their books. But the greater ones, those whom I should hold to be real artists, do want to represent these things as they believe they really happened.

PL. And to what purpose?

PH. In order to produce what we spoke of above as the aesthetic Good.

PL. But in such stories, where they are dealing, not with forms in space, as in the plastic arts, but with desires and thoughts and purposes, they must surely of necessity at every point be concerned with ethical values, and either they must know these rightly or wrongly.

PH. They would not say so. They would say that they are showing the values actually held by men; but whether those values are true or not, it is not for them to discuss.

PL. They can then but add to the chaos in which your whole life seems to be involved.

PH. I will not begin my defence yet, though I have much to say. But when we were speaking of art, I could not omit this topic, which occupies so large a part in our life. Let us go on now, if you like, to music.

PL. By all means. What have you to say about that? Music

PH. There is no art, I suppose, about which the views of yourself and of Aristotle differ so much from our modern ideas.

PL. In what way?

PH. You regarded music as the art which affected the morals of men more directly than any other, and you judged it exclusively by that criterion.

PL. Certainly.

PH. Yet music neither recalls objects of sense, like the plastic arts, nor deals with men, and therefore with morals, in action.

PL. True; but it affects the souls of men more profoundly than any other art, for it stirs them immediately, without intervention of any ideas, and according to its own quality shapes that of their emotions. Children are too immature to understand the truth about Good and Bad; but the kind of music they hear predisposes them to this or that reaction. Their characters are largely determined by such influences, and no legislator can afford to neglect an instrument so potent.

PH. You seem then to confess that the emotional life is more potent in determining conduct than the intellectual?

PL. It is, in young and undeveloped creatures. But the emotions cannot be rightly trained except by those who know what Good and Evil is, and it is those who have that knowledge that ought to prescribe the character of music. But you, no doubt, now have other views?

PH. Yes. Here, as everywhere in the arts, we are unwilling to admit that the ethical effect, whatever it may be, is a criterion of the merit. Music, we say, like plastic art, like poetry, like all literature so far

as it is an art at all, has an end of its own wholly and exclusively aesthetic.

PL. You deny then altogether the ethical effects of music?

PH. If we do not deny them we ignore them; except indeed in the case of religious music. Church Music

PL. That has a good ethical character?

PH. It was, I think, a great and pure art. But it was an art strictly limited; and outside it there grew up a huge crop of popular music, which makes no claim to religious or moral standards. Its most striking quality, indeed, is precisely its variety. In our musical performances, as in our exhibitions of painting and sculpture, there jostle one another compositions of every kind of excellence or defect, and of the most varied ethical suggestiveness. Some of our most remarkable musicians, for instance, are specially skilled in eliciting those erotic emotions which you were so anxious to limit and guide into the channel of healthy procreation. Others produce effects which you yourself might admit were spiritual. But among all these our public seems to have no preference or choice; for it listens to all alike with the same enthusiasm.

PL. You do not surprise me, for long ago I came to the conclusion that your society is

democratic in its taste, as in its politics. And your science no doubt enables it to gratify its preferences, if it is as potent in inventions that destroy the soul as it is in those that destroy the body. But tell me something more about your music. You have, I suppose, for instance, songs?

Songs

PH. Yes, and many that are very beautiful.

PL. In them, at any rate, you can hardly deny an ethical character, since there the words determine the music.

PH. Not so much with us as with you, for with us the music is more important than the words. And perhaps that is as well, for, as our songs are sung, we can seldom hear the words at all.

PL. Neglecting the words then, this music, I suppose, may have any and every character?

PH. Yes, it may be erotic, martial, comic, or, as is most common in my own country, merely sentimental.

PL. What is the meaning of that word?

Opera

PH. I could not tell you; you had no such thing in Greece. I was going to say that besides songs, we have an art, as you had, which is at once music and drama.

PL. I dare not hope, after all you have said, that it is better than ours was.

PH. From your point of view it is very much worse, so foolish, for the most part, are its

subjects and so trivial the emotions they excite. Yet here too we have music-dramas which aim at something more serious, though I fear you might disapprove them even more than those which, being lighter, are less impressive. However, it is not so much in the character of the emotions aroused that our music differs from yours, as in the mechanism at our disposal for exciting them.

PL. Can you make your meaning clearer?

The resources of Modern Music

PH. I will try, though words cannot really represent what must be heard to be understood. Thr essence of our music is not so much melody as what we call harmony, though we give a different meaning to the word from that which it had in Greece.

PL. What meaning?

PH. The co-operation, at the same time, of a number of different sounds and phrases, all going on at once with an interwoven complexity of which nothing but itself can give any idea. Where you had a dozen voices singing in unison, we have hundreds singing in parts. But more remarkable even than that is the difference in our instruments; where you had a lyre, a flute and a drum, we have a mighty chorus of strings, and brass, and wood, and drums, and of each of these many varieties, all blazing away

at once and intertwining, in a complex rope of sound, a thousand strands of varying texture and hue.

PL. That must be wonderful indeed!

PH. How wonderful I cannot tell you.

PL. Cannot you describe the effect?

PH. Only in stammering words. It is as though the soul were somehow set free and poured out into——

PL. Into what?

PH. I cannot say. Sometimes it seems heaven and sometimes hell. In any case, when it is over, it seems to have been something that makes life on earth, as we know it, stale and flat and unprofitable.

PL. If, as I think, the body in which you dwell is but a veil that may be rent, and that must in the end be rent, by death, the effect you describe is not surprising. Your music may be a kind of enchantment, revealing for a moment, by magic, to souls not duly prepared, what a true discipline would train them to face, when the time comes, with courage and security.

PH. Nothing so much as music makes me inclined to accept your view of our destiny. But that is not the subject we were discussing.

PL. It is however relevant to it, for an art which can tear the soul, like a chrysalis, prematurely from the cocoon in which it

is maturing, may be more questionable than any other. Let us however continue our discussion where it was interrupted. This art of yours, you say, being truly democratic, evokes any and every emotion with incredible force. Can you then still maintain that it has no effect on life? You have for instance, you say, erotic music? Erotic Music

PH. Yes.

PL. And that Eros I imagine is not what we used to call the heavenly, but rather the other?

PH. Very often that is so.

PL. Its effect then surely must be to stimulate the desires of the flesh with an extraordinary intensity?

PH. Yes.

PL. At the same time making people suppose that the satisfaction of them is something more wonderful and sublime than it really is?

PH. I should say so.

PL. They will then become more lustful as they hear more of this music, and yet will react from their lust with more disappointment, and return again, as drunkards do to intoxicants, to the illusion of a paradise that always eludes them?

PH. Possibly.

PL. Or take military music. Is not that too one of your drugs? Military Music

PH. Yes, and the most common, if not the most refined.

PL. Does it not make people feel martial and courageous?

PH. Yes.

PL. Although perhaps they have never been in a battle in their lives?

PH. Very likely.

PL. It makes them perhaps suppose that war is something very different from what in fact it is?

PH. Yes, that is its object. For if men knew what it is like, they would never want to incur it, whereas when they hear the music, they forget all they may have been told about the real thing, and are enchanted into imagining it to be all excitement and uniforms and glory and kissing girls.

PL. That too, I should urge, is false education. For if war is really necessary, the more it is understood for what it is, and faced in reality and truth, the better.

PH. Yes. This music is a device, and indeed a conscious one, for luring men to approve what they do not know, in order that they may continue to practise it.

Plato re-affirms His Position

PL. Well, I need not pursue my examples. But if these are the facts, is there not something to be said for my view that music should be carefully chosen so as to

correspond to that training in Reality which my citizens were to undergo, so that it should be neither an enchantment, evoking illusory expectations, nor yet a premature unlocking of the gate through which all must pass in the end, but rather an evocation of those emotions which are fit to sustain and inspire the very actions which reason tells men they ought to be learning to perform, and which will lead them, in due time to the great change we call death, fit to encounter its menace or its reward.

PH. Dear master, you begin to charm me as you did your young men in Athens. But I will be more stalwart than they were. I will say that I do not admit that Good exists in some other world, in perfect form, and filters down thence to us. It is for us on earth that it is good. Only we do not know, but perpetually seek it.

The Question of Censorship

PL. At any rate you admit that some kinds of Art are good and others bad. May I ask you then whether it is part of your plan to encourage the one and reject the other?

PH. Not by any formal censorship.

PL. Not?

PH. No, not even in the case of what I think more dangerous than real art.

PL. And what is that?

PH. Writing that is not literature, noise that is not music, and plastic form that is not significance. It is this that does really tend to destroy men's souls. Yet even this flood, rolling as it does like a huge river of mud through the minds of our flurried and hurried millions, even this I would not attempt to dam by censorship, much less what, being really art, elicits from those who can receive it a response disinterested and pure.

PL. Your policy seems hazardous. But you have, I suppose, your reasons.

PH. I have two, either of which seems to me sufficient.

PL. And they are?

No Man likely to be made a Censor can be fit to exercise the Office

PH. First, that it is impossible that any censorship men could ever set up could be fit to exercise such powers. In my own country, for example, we have one, and what does it do? It permits dirty jests, sly allusions, vulgar innuendoes to flourish unashamed on every stage and in every book, whilst it forbids serious or witty or profound treatment of the same things, because that, instead of half-revealing, half-concealing, under a provocative veil, its lascivious and seductive wares, exposes frankly and honestly, in the clear light of day, forms and passions to amuse, instruct and delight the aesthetic sense. Only think that it would be impossible now, in

my country, to write, still less to have performed, comedies like those of Aristophanes!

PL. My quarrel with him, as you know, was not his indecency, but his attack on Socrates.

PH. Yet it was you who represented him as Socrates' friend.

PL. As indeed he was, and of myself too. I should not have liked to be compelled to expel him. Your point however I can understand, that, in such a society as you are thinking of, it must be impossible to set up a sound censorship.

PH. And not only there, but in any society that has ever really existed. For those who actually come to power are never, in real life, philosopher-kings; they are soldiers and politicians and any sort of man who shares the prejudices of his countrymen, and rises by flattering them. What these men censor is what they think might shake their own power, or what the mass of their subjects dislike, not what is really dangerous or perverse.

PL. If you take your examples from the facts, rather than the ideal, I have nothing to say. What is your other reason?

PH. One more drastic and far-reaching still. Even if it were possible to establish a censorship by the wise and good, I would not favour doing so.

And even if there could be a good Censor, censorship would still be undesirable

PL. And why?

PH. Because, as I have said, I think Good and Evil can never be finally and securely known, but must be perpetually discovered and rediscovered.

PL. The old point!

PH. Not quite! For granting, I would say, that your philosopher-kings could be put into power, and that they knew Good perfectly and truly, and introduced their censorship to preserve it uncontaminated, yet still I should say they would be defeating their own object, or at any rate mine. For what I would wish to create is not men like statues, beautifully shaped for someone else to contemplate, but living creatures, choosing Good because they know Evil. And if they are to know it, it must not be silenced. Rather, just as you would have trained your soldiers by the perpetual presence of danger, so would I my citizens, by the perpetual solicitation of evil.

PL. And if they succumb to it?

PH. And if your soldiers succumbed to the enemy? They would succumb, and so doubtless many of them will. Others will slip and recover themselves, some few will never fall. But always Goodness will be being tested, as in a free society is truth, by the method of trial and error.

Do standards of Good exist, even though they be not known?

PL. Very well, let us accept your view, paradoxical though it seems to me; but let us see at least what it implies. You are saying, as I understand you, that, although men do not know Good and Evil, since they are to be perpetually discovering and rediscovering it, yet Good and Evil do, in some sense, somewhere and somehow exist, or they could not be discoverable.

PH. Yes, something of that kind.

PL. You reject, then, the position which I remember finding, in Athens, the most difficult to refute, that of the sceptics who deny that there are any standards prescribing Goods for everybody, or "in themselves," or whatever you would say, but only the opinions of any individual man as to what he does in fact judge it best to pursue. Have you no such school now?

PH. In my own country, as I have already said, we are not philosophers, and it is impossible to say what views people do really hold. But I should say, from my own observation, that many of us do in practice accept the sceptical view, so far and so long as it spells advantage to ourselves; but if, or when, it is turned against us by others, we fall back on standards, declare our opponents to be immoral

men, and do our best to have them punished.

The View of the Sophists

PL. Men's thoughts, so far as I can learn from you, have not changed very much since my time. For our sophists used to argue that a strong man, though he would not accept the conventions of morality, might support them as applied to others. "They may be useful to me," he would admit, "and so far must be defended, but I may always break them, if this use should cease."

PH. Your sophists were more clear in their minds than are ordinary men. But many people do certainly act on some such view.

PL. And what could you reply, if a sophist put that view into words?

The argument from the Herd

PH. I should bring up arguments from history and biology rather than from philosophy. I should point out that common standards are earlier and more natural than individualistic self-interest. I should point to animals living in herds and to communities of insects, and show how all these creatures serve not themselves but the society, having not indeed a common ethical system, for we assume them not to think, but a common rule of life. And what we find in these creatures, I should add, we find also in the most primitive

communities of men. They live under rules which it has never occurred to them to challenge. So that the common observance, which shows itself later as a convention, is the original fact, and has more authority, therefore, in the nature of things, than the egoistic perversion which grows up later like a disease, among men who have strayed from the natural atmosphere of the herd in which alone they can breathe healthily.

PL. Your egoists must be less convinced and pertinacious than ours if they are silenced by such arguments. For my young men, made subtle as they were by the sophists, would certainly have replied, that insects and animals and primitive communities were no law for them, that civilisation means precisely escape from such base and slavish conditions, and that, if standards can in fact be denied, it is absurd to pretend that they ought not to be, merely because some primitive and savage creatures had not yet learnt how restrictive they are upon the splendour and force of noble individuals.

The argument from Civilised Society

PH. If that line were adopted, I should reply that standards are as necessary to self-preservation in civilised as in primitive societies. For no individual can stand by himself. If his property, his contracts, his

life and person are to be secure, he must submit to rules; and if he breaks them, then, sooner or later, they will break him, as example after example is continually proving.

PL. At that point my sophist will return to his old argument. He will say: Yes, it may pay us to observe standards, but we observe them only if and because it pays us. If, by any chance, in any matter, we can safely elude them, to our own advantage, we shall certainly do so, and think it right to do so.

PH. I should have to agree that the observation of social standards is in itself no sign of a social sense. Enlightened egotism would dictate the same conduct as social duty, as far as the ordinary business of life is concerned. But it is at least interesting and important to note that, within limits, social rules are essential to individual egoism. As your Aristotle said, a man who can dispense with them must be either above or below humanity, or, as we should say, below even the animals and the insects.

The attitude of Supermen

PL. "I will grant you," I can hear my Athenian youth retort. "I will grant you that a consistent and intelligent egoist will observe in common matters the fundamental social rules, though twisting them

always, so far as he safely can, to his own advantage. But he will go no further than that. Standing as it were on this scaffold of rules, he will then launch himself into the air. His ambition will be to make himself so rich that he can afford to outrage opinion, or so strong that he can control and dominate it. It is such men that make the great tyrants, and the tyrant is the type and exemplar of all great men." You have such men, I suppose, still among you?

PH. Oh yes, always, and of them I do, of course, agree that they impose on others the common rule, but would never observe it themselves if it should interfere with their lusts or ambitions. They are supermen, and there is nothing to be said or done about them. We can but wait to see them fall. For fall they always do, in the end.

PL. You ought not perhaps to make much of that, even if it be true, for good men too fall, and in more terrible ways. They are the martyrs of the world.

PH. True, and I will not attempt to prove more than experience itself does, that there is a social ethic expressed in the common rules of societies, which in fact most men recognise as binding, whether their motive, be individual or social. In this matter, I

would say, a standard does actually impose itself even on those who may deny it.

PL. But you do not say, if I understood you rightly, that such standards have anything but a temporary and transitory value. At any rate, you condemn the standards of your own time, and propose very radical modifications.

PH. Yes. But these social standards, expressed in political and economic organisation, are never ends, but only means.

Equality and Liberty as necessary conditions if all men are to have the chance of access to Higher Goods

PL. One thing at least you seem to regard as an end,—social and political equality. For you said that you would sacrifice to that, if necessary, even the Goods you claim to be the higher Goods.

PH. I did say so, and I stick to it. Some measure of happiness for the great majority of men I regard as more important than the achievement by a few of higher Goods at the cost of great misery to the rest. But I said also that I did not think those alternatives are really presented to us.

PL. At any rate your position seems to show that you consider equality to be an absolute Good.

PH. Yes, I suppose I do, some measure at least of it.

PL. And equality is a political and economic fact?

PH. Yes.

PL. You ought then I suppose to say that, though you think particular institutions indifferent as means, equality is the essential at which they should all aim.

PH. Yes.

PL. And must you not say the same of liberty? For just now, at any rate, you argued that liberty of thought and speech was a condition of there coming to be, or enduring in the world, any real Goods at all.

PH. Yes, I do think that. But the character and form of the political institutions that are actually required, in order that essential liberties may be preserved, is, I should say, a matter of experience, and might vary much from time to time.

PL. Equality, at any rate, and liberty, in the sense you are giving to those terms, are Goods in themselves?

PH. Perhaps rather they are conditions necessary to be fulfilled, if Good is to be open to the whole of the citizens of a community; and this openness to all I think more important than actual attainment by one or two, at the cost of all the rest. But the Goods themselves will still have to supervene on the opportunity, and be realised by those who are able to realise them.

Plato Summarises

PL. I understand. You differ then from the sceptic in your belief that everybody ought, whatever he himself may be, whether superman or poet, or artist or anything else, to desire and, so far as he can, to further, a state of things in which opportunity of reaching real Good is open to everyone?

PH. Yes.

PL. And you differ also from the sceptic in holding that there are real Goods, somehow valid for everybody; whereas he says that only what every man happens to hold to be good is to be accounted so, everyone's opinion being as good as anyone else's?

PH. Yes.

PL. You have asserted also that any kind of Good that you would hold to be absolute will have aesthetic quality. And in this region of aesthetics you think that there is a standard, even though people don't know in any final way what it is?

PH. Yes. I believe that some people know better than others about aesthetic Good, and that there is a right and a wrong judgment, whether or no it can be proved.

PL. And you attach much importance to this point.

PH. Yes; but I want to develop it a little.

PL. Pray do.

PH. When the discussion is merely about this or that picture or statue, I often get impatient,—having perhaps not much sense for those things,—and say, "What does it all matter? Think what you like." But when I reflect more deeply, I feel that this question goes to the root of all values.

PL. Why so?

PH. For the reason I have already given, that when I think of any experience I can judge to be really good, it is always in some sense aesthetic. You yourself, as I was saying, always represented your mystic Good as somehow perceived, and, though you may say the perception you meant was not the same as that of our senses, yet it must, I think, be at least analogous and not reducible to mere thought or to something as abstract as that. At least, if it were, I do not think I could admit it to be good. And always, so far as I can see, whenever we feel anything to be really good, an element of sense is present, as for instance in love.

Is there really a Standard of Aesthetic Good?

PL. And this aesthetic Good, I understand you to say, has value somehow in itself, independent of opinions that may be held about it?

PH. I think that some people are better judges of it than others.

PL. I will not dispute your position, but I feel a great difficulty about it.

PH. Which difficulty? For I am sure there are many.

PL. Where do these standards, in which you say you believe, reside?

PH. I suppose in men's minds.

PL. But then, why do not men know them perfectly?

The Doctrine of the Subconscious

PH. That sort of objection no longer troubles us now. For all the most important elements in men are said to reside in a kind of obscure depth, called the Subconscious, out of which they may emerge from time to time.

PL. And do you call that underground abyss Mind?

PH. We say that it provides material for Mind, rising up into it sometimes in dreams, sometimes in real life, then disappearing again, or sometimes establishing itself in permanence.

PL. I must not allow myself to digress into the implications and problems of such a view. But, so far as concerns our present point, these standards, I understand you to say, that rise in this way imperfectly into the mind, never do so completely and finally, but only more or less, according to the circumstances of the individual.

PH. Yes, it would be something like that.

PL. They are not however like statues gradually emerging from a mist. In fact they do not themselves appear at all. What appears is, on the one hand some particular object, a picture or statue or poem or something dimmer and more confused, such as you said presented itself when you tried to conceive imaginatively the physical world, and then, a judgment about them. Afterwards a critic may compare these visions, and try to elicit some general truth, which however will only be partially true, and as to which there will be a great deal of disputation.

PH. That certainly is what happens.

PL. Still, then, I have my difficulty in saying where this standard is. Or do you suppose that, whenever the case arises, a message goes down to what you call the Subconscious, conveying knowledge of the work of art that is in question, and then the Subconscious sends up a message saying how it ought to be judged, whether good or bad or indifferent; and then, some time later, corrects that view, when another occasion arises, and yet never, though it has the standard there, allows it to show up as it really is?

PH. It sounds queer, I admit.

PL. So queer, that my young men in Athens, I think, would have made mincemeat of it.

At any rate I should not have cared to put it forward to them.

PH. I dare say, but they were tiresome and eristic, like most of us clever young men, enjoying more the destruction of arguments than the discovery of truth. I shall not be put off from my attempt to state the facts because they seem to be rather queer.

PL. My young men would have said that all your difficulties arose from the fact that you will assume standards; whereas, if you simply said that one opinion is as good as another and the word truth has no application to any of them, all your difficulties would vanish.

The Plain Man's View

PH. No doubt all difficulties vanish, if you refuse to look the facts in the face, and our plain men, especially in my own country, do take just that view about art. They think all theories are nonsense, the only fact being that some people like some things and others others. But when they come to Ethics, they are much less ready to make that assumption, but think it so important who is right or wrong, or, I should rather say, so important that they themselves should be right—for they concede no right to others—that they are ready to massacre millions of men, in order to show that their judgment is

true by winning a victory of force. Yet scepticism about ethics is at least as plausible as scepticism about aesthetics.

PL. Well, let us assume that there are standards. The question then is, where do they reside? And on that point may I suggest another idea more plausible than yours? *If there are Standards, where are they?*

PH. Pray do.

PL. You must forgive me if I have recourse, in my tiresome way, to a myth. When I was on your earth, I was always fascinated by the beauty of the stars.

PH. I know; I do not forget your lovely epigram.

PL. What was that?

PH. "You gaze upon the stars. Would I could be
Those myriad eyes, all gazing down on thee."

PL. Did I say that? Well, let us imagine that really, up there, Being shines in eternal day, and that the stars are little holes cut in the purple sky, through which that radiance peeps down upon us. Your standards then would reside, in reality and truth, up above, and it would be the shimmer of them, coming faintly through to you, that would make you speak of the truly beautiful or the truly good. Only, one must add, the various imperfections of our eyes cause us to see differently the faint and glimmering effulgence. *In Heaven?*

PH. Yes. But after all that is only a metaphor. For you did not really conceive the stars as tiny points of light, and we certainly cannot do so, not the most ignorant among us.

PL. You are hard on metaphors.

PH. Because, dear master, I know you so well, and how, by their means, you would smuggle in a whole philosophy which argument could not demonstrate. And, though I love to hear you, I will not let you lead me astray.

PL. You quarrel with my metaphor; but I dare say you will fall into others of your own, when you try to express what you are dimly thinking.

In the Subconscious?

PH. Yes. My quarrel, really, is not with your use of metaphor, but with the kind of metaphor you use. I shall try a different one. I shall say that this element which conveys standards is something embedded somehow, in the beginning, deep within primitive life, like a chrysalis lying enchanted in its cocoon. Then, when the fullness of time is come, it breaks through, and emerges into the light of consciousness, like a golden butterfly, and flutters through the garden of art, now to this flower, now to that, beautifully disputing, as we may suppose, in some heavenly tongue of its own, with comrades who

have visited other flowers, and whose experience is therefore different, though all be the experience of art.

PL. You quarrelled with my metaphor, as involving assumptions, but I must quarrel with yours, as missing the essential point. For, according to you, the butterfly never does emerge in its complete form, but as it were in fragments, suggestive of something perfect, while yet never realising it.

PH. Well then, let me put it like this. This element, which we call subconscious, may be a single entity underlying all individual consciousnesses and pushing up into them, as much as they can admit or bear. We individuals may be like little peaks of rock growing into the air out of a vast submerged reef. In that submerged part is the standard, but our emergence from the water below cuts us off from all of it except such little bit as is contained in what emerges.

PL. I shall be more merciful to your metaphor than you were to mine, and I will not press its weaknesses. I understand you to imply that there is a Being, somehow, somewhere, which has the true and complete standard, and which filters it imperfectly through to human minds; that Being it is that you have been naming the Subconscious.

PH. Yes.

PL. This Being then I suppose is conscious, and lives in and for and by the experience which is the standard; but its consciousness emerges only imperfectly in men?

PH. I don't know that it need be conscious. It might be just a drive, unconscious, but coming by degrees to consciousness in us. That, at least, is how we do, some of us, envisage it.

PL. May I confess that your view does not seem to me either more intelligible or more obviously true than my own? Let us however accept it, and leave it there, for you are reluctant to plunge into what you think are mysteries. There is however one point which I wish to bring into relief before we leave this subject.

PH. What is that?

Return to the Relation of Art to Real Objects

PL. A little time ago, when we were talking of plastic art, I observed that, on the theory you put forward, it would seem that the best art would not recall or be suggested by objects of sense at all, but would consist of pure patterns drawn or moulded in space imaginary or real. The only sensible element would be the actual materials, paint or stone, in which the work of art was shaped.

PH. Yes, and I said that the only reason why real objects were taken as points of

departure was because our imagination is too feeble to invent, unless it is stimulated by the innumerable shapes actually presented to us in the sensible world.

PL. Well, I was not, and am not satisfied with that explanation, though I cannot refute it. I cannot but think that something deeper is the real reason of your practice in the arts, though your theories may be reluctant to admit it.

PH. What then do you believe?

PL. If I were still on earth I think I should answer somewhat as follows: The ideal element, I should say, is somehow reflected in the sensible, though I admit that I was never able to explain how. But if it be true, as it may be, that art is inspired by that element, or by some aspect of it—for you say that Art is indifferent to all other kinds of Good except the aesthetic—then Art is in quest of that same thing that glimmers somehow through the forms of the sensible world. In men that element works somehow—how we could not determine satisfactorily—as an impulse to shape Art, and also, as I should add, to shape life itself by means of right institutions; in nature it is the indwelling urge and push of all that is and lives. Whether we are to say that it attracts from in front or pushes from behind, may be matter of

long discussion, and perhaps for ever insoluble to men; but that it is somehow a fact I cannot avoid believing, and that it is attainable by good men, who never cease to follow after it, is and remains my obstinate faith.

PH. If indeed anyone is able to believe such things, I do not say that they are refutable. But I shrink from admitting as a necessary postulate of good conduct right ideas about something which not only is not demonstrable, but which facts, when one is involved in their maelstrom, seem to make unbelievable. Up here, where all is still save our voices discoursing, much may seem possible that seems impossible below, and I am charmed, as I always was, even on earth, by your beliefs. If I resist them, it is because I have to return to that place where the stress of events may prevent me from clinging to them, but where, none the less, I know that I have to quit myself like a good man, without any help or comfort save my own conscience.

Transition to Love

PL. Let us then pause here, for I cannot persuade you by demonstration, since you are not really dead—or rather alive—nor admitted to those experiences which I myself, in this place, am not allowed to recall. You see, however, that an earnest

pursuit of the problem of Good leads us into strange places. But since we have said all that we need about knowledge and art, have you any other Good, of those you call absolute, to describe?

PH. I am not sure. But there is one thing I should like to discuss with you, because you wrote about it with such ambiguity. At one time you seem to have thought of it as not only Good but the highest Good; at another to have despised it altogether. And, in any case, you held views about it which, to most modern men, seem to be very questionable.

PL. What is this curious centaur or chimaera?

PH. Its name is Love.

PL. A vast theme indeed, if you have as many kinds of it as we had.

PH. We have of course, and as many words. We speak, as you did, of lust, desire, passion, and many such things; yet all these we regard as forms of love.

PL. We were in much the same case.

PH. So I suppose. Well, it is in that large region that I want to hunt for something that might be called an ideal.

PL. Begin the hunt, then, by all means.

PH. I will begin with your own find. For it has always puzzled and intrigued me.

PL. I am afraid I may have now lost what once I thought I had found. It

is so long since I have consorted with bodies.

PH. You seem to have consorted with them rather imperfectly even when you were on earth; and that is what I find so interesting.

PL. Please remind me.

The Love of Men for Men

PH. Well, to begin with, when you spoke of love, you were thinking always of the love of men for men, not of that between people of opposite sexes.

PL. I do indeed remember that that was so in my youth.

PH. Not only in your youth, I think; for up to middle life you seem still to have held the same view.

PL. Indeed?

PH. Yes, indeed! And that love you treated in a way which, if it has inspired some men, has horrified others, and puzzled the rest, right down to our time.

PL. How was it that my doctrine produced these disturbing effects?

PH. Well, to begin with, in many parts of the world, and especially in my own country, such love is regarded with reprobation and contempt.

PL. Why so?

PH. I must reply by another question. In your treatment of that love did you not admit that the body has a part in it?

PL. When souls are shut up in bodies do not the bodies, of necessity, take part in the affections of the soul?

PH. I think they do. But most men among us think, or think they think, that men ought not to be attracted by the bodies of men, nor women by those of women.

PL. Perhaps, in some sense, they ought not; but then they ought not to be men nor women. They ought to be, if they could, pure spirits. But we are speaking, I understand, of such love as men do in fact feel. Or are you now, on earth, so extreme in your idealism that you try to love without bodies?

PH. Hardly! But, dear master, you must know that you are evading the point. We think, most of us, that physical love ought only to exist between people of opposite sexes, and if we find it among those of the same sex we reprobate and punish it.

PL. That seems to be rather partial. For souls shut up in bodies are as susceptible, or were with us, to the one love as to the other.

A Platonic Myth

PH. Of course. I have not forgotten, nor has the world, the myth you put into the mouth of Aristophanes.

PL. What was that?

PH. About how men used once to be round balls, with four arms and four legs, and

two sets of sexual organs apiece, and moved themselves by turning head over heels, like small boys; and how, in this condition, they were so powerful and dangerous that the gods became afraid of what they might do, so they cut them in half, reducing them thus to their present form. And ever since they have been going about seeking each his lost half. Some of them had, originally, the organs both of the male and female sex, but others had them both male, or both female. The former, therefore, were always seeking men women, and women men, but the others either men men, or women women.

PL. The myth is crude; but is it not a true account of the real facts?

PH. I believe it is. But among us, though apparently not among you, those who pursue the opposite sex are so numerous, and so strongly supported by convention and morals and law, that the others dare only creep about in secrecy, concealing the nature they cannot abjure.

PL. We are speaking, are we not, at present, about love, not parenthood?

PH. Yes. For parenthood, of course, the sexes must be opposite.

PL. Speaking then solely about love, it seems likely to be at least as good between

people of the same sex as in the other case.

PH. But you went further than that. For when you were speaking about love you never even discussed it, as between men and women, but only between men and men.

PL. As far as I remember, I never saw it existing, in any good form, between men and women.

PH. That is just what seems to us so odd! Because we, on the contrary, most of us, refuse to admit that it can be good at all between men and men, whereas we are ready to assume that it is often, if not always, good between men and women.

Plato reaffirms his Position

PL. You surprise me! For surely it must be as true among you, as it was among us, that men are the sex of the active mind and the beautiful body? I cannot myself remember ever seeing, in Athens or elsewhere, any woman worth considering, except as a mother of children. Whereas the young men were not only, for the most part, beautiful to look at, but often so keen in their intelligence that one could always hope that they might grow, in the end, into something fine and noble.

PH. You certainly give that impression in your dialogues, as it has never been given before or since.

PL. Well then, surely love between people thus

gifted must be worth more than it could be between inferior beings?

PH. It is curious, dear master, but somehow you seem unable to realise, in spite of my dwelling upon it, that most modern men, when they think of love between men, conceive—call it prejudice or ignorance, or what you like—that a mixture of physical feeling at once turns the whole relation into something bestial.

PL. I certainly find that hard to understand.

PH. And then, there is something odder still. Whereas your doctrine seems to most of us so terribly immoral, on the other hand you have the reputation of being so pure in your conception of love that we never speak of "platonic" love without a touch of irony, because it is thought to be something impossible and therefore hypocritical.

PL. I find it very hard to adjust myself to your ideas. But my remembrance certainly is that the love of men for men was a higher thing than that of men for women.

PH. I know, of course, that that is what you said in your best and most beautiful dialogues; but then, suddenly, you seemed to change over completely, and in the last work of your old age made that very thing a crime which before you had celebrated as a divine initiation.

PL. Ah, but was it really the same thing?

PH. How do you mean?

And explains why he later abandoned it

PL. The love I was thinking about, in those earlier dialogues, was more of the soul than of the body, even though the body took part in it; and even that part, I thought, might gradually diminish till it disappeared. But I found, as I grew more experienced, that the love, or rather the lust, of men for men, was really, as a rule, no better than that of men for women; and so in the end I came to condemn it.

PH. You came to think that love of the kind you celebrated earlier was, for all practical purposes, impossible?

PL. I concluded, at any rate, that it was very rare.

PH. And if, on the other hand, between men and women you approved sexual intercourse, that was only because there was no other way of producing children?

PL. Yes. For when I was speaking as a legislator, that was the important point.

The Engendering and bearing of Good Children has nothing to do with Love

PH. That brings me to another stone of stumbling about your doctrine. I said that when we speak of "platonic" love we speak ironically. But, on the other hand, when we consider your view of the relation between the opposite sexes, we accuse you of gross materialism.

PL. You seem, in your country, to leap from

one extreme to the other, just like a lot of fleas or crickets. Why, pray, do I seem to you, in this respect, materialistic?

PH. Because, in considering the relations of men to women, you think of nothing but the engendering of children, and give no place to love at all.

PL. But what has love to do with it? Love is one thing and child-bearing another. I thought we had agreed about that.

PH. Yes, you and I. But it doesn't follow that other people agree.

PL. What then do other people think?

PH. Most of them, I believe, when they are young, would think that, where there is love, the offspring are likely to be good.

PL. But did you not say earlier that there is no evidence of that?

PH. So far as I know, there is not. But neither is there evidence of the contrary. We know so very little about the matter. So that, except in some comparatively few cases, those who marry for love may not unreasonably hope that their children too will be tolerable, though they cannot of course be sure of it.

PL. While we live on hope we can of course hope for anything. But I was trying to base my society on science.

PH. So should I wish to do. But, in fact, we do not yet possess the science that will

perhaps one day enable us to legislate for good parenthood. And anyhow, we are not now discussing parenthood but love.

PL. As I have said, it was not my experience that women were capable of love, in any sense in which love has value.

PH. And as I have said, that seems to me very strange. For these same women, you supposed, when you were constructing your Republic, to be capable of everything of which men were capable, both physically and mentally, so that you would have included them among your soldiers and your guardians.

PL. Yes, that is true.

But a Good Love is possible between Men and Women

PH. Well, there does seem to me to be a contradiction there. At any rate I believe that even between such men and women as we have, much more therefore among those you imagined, it is possible to form a relation so good that I would be willing to include it among the things to be sought for their own sakes.

PL. In that case, please tell me more about your idea.

PH. I am not married myself, nor likely to be. But I think that, in marriage, a love may develop which is not merely passion, as when people are said to "fall in love" (in which case they are apt to "fall" out again) nor merely utility, nor merely

family life, though all those things may come in, but one which, after many illusions perhaps, many quarrels it may be, many comings together and flyings apart again, may grow at last into a union which is so close and profound that it really deserves to be called Good, in the sense in which we are now using that term.

PL. Such a relation is so far from anything I can recall in Greece that I can hardly imagine it. It seems indeed to have the fidelity which I conceived in relations between men. But has it also the element of public service and philosophy?

PH. Hardly of philosophy, but sometimes of public service; for that is possible now among us, with the new opportunities we have opened out for women. But, quite apart from that, the relation, I should say, is very good, as good at least as most that can be formed between men.

PL. And is it common?

The Errors and Perversions of Sex

PH. No, nothing very good is common, and sex in particular is full of pitfalls.

PL. It is indeed, as I recollect it. So full, that I was driven in my later life to ignore it when I was considering real Good.

PH. But was not that a little extreme?

PL. I do not think so. For consider what sex is. It promises so much and yet so often, when it gets what it was pursuing, finds that it

no longer wants it. Its desire, as soon as it is fulfilled, turns into indifference or hate. The body takes charge and tiring in turn of everything it has possessed, goes about roaring like a wild beast, the less satisfied the more it pursues satisfaction.

PH. Oh yes, I know. And in our time there is much more to be said which either did not exist or was not attended to in Greece.

PL. Of what are you thinking?

PH. We have a whole new science about the disabilities and confusions of sex, engendered, as we are taught, even in the very womb. We have men in female bodies and women in male ones; we have sex-impulses diverted into desires that have nothing to do with procreation; and this, not through the fault of the people concerned, but through misfortunes reaching back to their very infancy. The tragedy of all this hardly bears thinking of, and there are many whom it overwhelms.

Still there is possible a Love which is a Real Good

PL. I will not allow myself to think or to hear more of it, delivered as I am into a better world. But I understand you to say that, nevertheless, in the midst of all this error and confusion, there does win through here and there, a kind of love which you judge to be a real Good.

PH. Yes.

PL. And that between men and women?

PH. Yes.

PL. But not between people of the same sex?

PH. Yes, between them too, though perhaps more rarely. The adventure is the same, in either case, the dangers as great, the shipwrecks as many.

PL. If I may ask you, without distressing you . . .

PH. Yes?

PL. Are you not, perhaps, one of those who, like me when on earth, are drawn in love to your own sex?

PH. Yes.

PL. You know then, as I did, the perils as well as the raptures.

PH. I think so.

PL. And you will escape, as I hope, in the end, into a world more real.

PH. I do not know, dear master, that I want to. I want to love as you once did, and, if I dared, I would say that perhaps I do.

Plato doubts it

PL. In that case, I hope that, when your work is done, we may meet again, here or elsewhere. Meantime, let me tell you the reason why this love for persons does not seem to me, even at the best, to be a true good.

PH. Yes, tell me please.

PL. All souls on earth are imprisoned in the matter we call bodies, and it is souls in bodies that are the object of love.

PH. Yes.

PL. But bodies are doomed to perish.

PH. Of course.

PL. Well then, even if we assume the best you claim for love, if we suppose a union growing closer as experience grows, and taking up into itself and transforming even the evil it has itself engendered, yet consider! At any moment, capriciously and without warning, one of these lovers may perish; or worse, the body failing, the soul too may be obscured, gradually or by a sudden process, and where was mutual love there may be left nothing but a memory, an indifference, or even a hatred. What have you to say about a Good that is thus, at the best, transitory and perishable?

PH. I have never said that the things I am calling good were secure, still less eternal. I only say that there are good things which good men can pursue so long as physical conditions permit, whatever be the latter end of their pursuit.

PL. You speak like a man leading a forlorn hope. I pray only that you may be able to retain your courage, not here only in imagination, in this quiet interlude from storms, but there too whither you are returning, amid the blasts of the very hurricane itself.

PH. I pray that I may.

Transition to the Question of Life beyond Death

PL. The omens are good and I commend your courage. Yet is it not possible that you are throwing away a talisman that might save you in some moment of unendurable stress.

PH. Of what are you thinking?

PL. Of a truth about that very life to which you are returning.

PH. What truth?

PL. That it is itself a part only, and a very small one, of a life that is deeper and more significant, and its Goods but faint glimmerings-through from the source of all light.

PH. If you can take me to that source, and bathe me in it, I will believe you.

PL. I cannot do that, for you are not free from the bonds of earth.

The Folly and Evil of Men's belief about a future Life

PH. I can then but judge by the experience I have had. And I judge that, whatever that truth may be that is inaccessible to men, their guesses and hopes and fears about God and another world have seldom helped them to behave better, and commonly caused them to behave worse.

PL. Do you think so?

PH. I do indeed; and perhaps in that matter, whether or no we are grown wiser and better than you were in Greece, we have at least a wider range of experience.

PL. And your experience tells you?

PH. That primitive men, such as have occupied the great spaces of the earth through all the long millenniums of time, have commonly believed, about gods and a future life, things as harmful as they have been foolish.

PL. What sort of things?

PH. They have believed in crowds of spirits, inhabiting every sort of object, sometimes helpful, more often capricious and malign, to propitiate whom they have done and do things the most inhuman and idiotic.

PL. What do they do?

PH. What not? They offer human sacrifices. They murder kings when they grow old because they can no longer do—what of course they never could—command the weather and the crops. They kill and eat their enemies that they may assimilate their souls. They lie down and die because they have done by chance some innocent thing forbidden by their superstitions. They hang themselves because, as they believe, a spirit desiring incarnation is urging them to do so, that it may be born into their place. All their beliefs, in a word, are dictated by cupidity and fear; and this great river of evil creeps like a pestilence for ever through the dark and tangled jungle of history.

PL. You seem indeed to have knowledge about the superstitions of men from which we were happily free in Greece. But it is not such beliefs as these that you will accuse me of defending and fostering?

The Doctrine of Punishment and Reward after Death is equally Fruitful o Evil

PH. No. But if I may speak my true mind I am not sure that those you did actually preach were not even worse in their effects.

PL. You frighten me. Is that really so?

PH. I think so.

PL. But pray explain.

PH. You taught a doctrine which since your day has haunted the minds of men, that crimes are punished and virtues rewarded even after death.

PL. And has that been so fruitful of evil?

PH. In my judgment it has.

PL. But how so?

PH. Because even on earth, punishment, even if it be a necessary evil, is nevertheless a very great one. But after death the plea of necessity loses what meaning it may have here, while the terror and the madness rage uncontrolled.

PL. May not such a bit be necessary to check that dangerous beast called man?

PH. It has never done so, I think. It has only given a new excuse for the operations of his baser passions.

PL. How so?

PH. Through the putting into practice of the idea that informed your latest book.

PL. What was that?

PH. If you remember, you abandoned philosophy as the foundation of a state, and fell back upon religion.

PL. Did I indeed?

PH. Yes. And that idea or prophecy of yours was actually taken up and fulfilled some centuries after your death.

PL. Indeed? There did then, after all, accrue, even on earth, some practical consequences of my work?

The Christian Church

PH. Whether as a consequence or not, the thing happened. A company of poor men arose who believed that they had known a God upon earth; that, after being put to a shameful death, he had risen from the dead in triumph, and that, in the fullness of time, he would return from the skies to judge the earth, summoning the good to heaven and the bad to hell, much as you yourself imagined in one of your myths.

PL. Go on.

PH. After the death of this God his disciples set out to preach his gospel. They were persecuted, as you said the good must always be. But the more they suffered the more their gospel spread, until at last it became the religion of a great empire.

PL. And then?

PH. Its priests behaved as you had suggested yours should. They tried first by every means to persuade men of the truth. But when they failed they imprisoned them, and in case of contumacy put them to death.

PL. A terrible necessity! But in the tragic life of men, order at such a cost may be better than disorder at a greater.

PH. That will depend, will it not, on what the order is?

PL. Your priests, I assume, had introduced an order that was good.

PH. They meant to, but they could not. There was no disorder which did not flourish either because of, or in spite of, them. Wars were as fierce and bloody as ever, theft and murder as common, poverty as bitter, wealth as cynical and hard. Church and state chained together, grew into one substance, till none could say which had been sinner and which saint. Religion no more than philosophy had revealed or could impose the absolute Good.

PL. It would seem, from what you tell me, that men are even more incapable of good than I had thought.

PH. I do not know that. They are capable of Good in a reasonable measure. What I am urging is that their supernatural beliefs have never helped them to it but

always hindered; and among those beliefs this one, in particular, that there is another life when life on earth is over.

PL. Even if what you say be true, it might nevertheless be the fact that such a life there is.

PH. Yes; but no one yet has been able to give the proof of it. Our religion, like your mysteries, merely affirms it, or if it argues, argues no better than you did.

Plato's Arguments for Immortality

PL. Did I argue so badly?

PH. Forgive me, but I do not think you were very convincing.

PL. I forget what I said, for now that I know there is another life, arguments about it have ceased to be of any importance.

PH. The argument on which you laid most stress was this. You said that no causal connexion was possible between soul and body, and that therefore, even though the body decayed and perished, we could not conclude therefrom to the death of the soul.

PL. I still think that is true.

PH. But surely, if you mean by the soul what we call consciousness, then it is clear and palpable that there is connexion through and through. The slightest pain disturbs the thoughts of a philosopher, and a pain that is acute prevents him from thinking at all. A knock on the head makes him

imbecile; and even in the most fortunate cases, such as was your own, though a choice spirit may continue to think clearly and well over a long period of years, yet in the end decay will set in and at last the soul end with the body.

PL. Are you not over-hasty in so concluding? May it not be that the soul, though its manifestation fails with the failure of the body, yet does not fail itself; as the player on an instrument, though he is hampered when a string breaks, and silenced if his sounding-board is smashed, yet is not thereby affected in himself, but only in his playing?

PH. Yes, I admit the possibility of that. Indeed we still so argue, and often ingeniously enough. Only the other day I heard the point put by one of our scientists.

PL. What did he say?

PH. That the soul comes into the body at birth and leaves it at death; but its entrance is gradual, as its exit may be. For in a child's body there is very little room for the soul, because the body, or the brain, or whatever it may be, is so small. But as years go on it becomes more capacious, and the soul occupies more and more space in it. Then comes old age, and the body, being riddled as it were with holes, lets the soul leak out again,

till at death it runs entirely away. And this, he said, is illustrated by the facts of lunacy. For we have a phrase that in such cases a man "is not all there," meaning that his soul has not managed to get properly inside his body.

PL. And what do you think of that argument?

PH. That it cannot be refuted. But there is so much that cannot be refuted that nevertheless is absurd. And a wise man will not base anything important for life on mere guesses, however ingenious.

PL. Your science, then, leaves this question undecided?

PH. It has hardly begun to take cognisance of it, and I can hardly blame it, so vast, in this matter are the credulities and impostures of men, so shameless their greed, so pitiful their desires; so that investigation can hardly find a ground that is not too slippery to stand upon. Still we are beginning to do something.

PL. And with what result?

PH. It might be premature to say. But one truth does seem to be gradually emerging.

PL. What is that?

PH. We are beginning to see that the consciousness of men, as most of us have it, is but a superficial appearance, that reaches down—though most of us are unaware of it—into a great common reservoir, where

The Subconscious and the Divine

everything that has once been perceived or thought or dreamed, is somehow recorded.

PL. Who is it that is aware of this?

PH. Directly, only a few people, and those by no means the best or the most intelligent, but often enough the very reverse. It is as though, in their case, an envelope that shuts most of us off from that region were torn or frayed, and the individual consciousness filtered down into this common region, which normally is inaccessible.

PL. Let me understand you. You seem to suggest, as indeed you did before, that individual minds or souls are like points of rock emerging from the sea at different distances, and appearing like a swarm of tiny islands, though really they are connected below in a common reef, from which in fact they all arise.

PH. Yes, something like that.

PL. It was in some such universal Mind that I too believed. And is it not possible that what we are calling the reservoir, or the reef, may really be what I used to call the Divine?

PH. Hardly, if by divine you mean, as I suppose you do, also good. For this reservoir seems to be rather like a common cloaca, into which flow all the ordures of the world.

PL. Those only?

PH. Those at least among the rest.

PL. To be preserved, let us hope, for only a short time. But in that region may there not be, besides these sheddings from souls imprisoned in bodies, also visions and thoughts and powers inconceivable to men?

PH. There may and there may not. But, as I said, a wise man will not base his life on tales.

PL. If tales they be, and only tales. But consider, how strange is the whole life of men; how they imagine as well as experience, guess as well as know, dream as well as wake, hope and fear as well as act! And may there not be some use for those faculties that float above the world of sense, other than that to which they have commonly been put of multiplying your follies and your crimes? Plato on Myths

PH. There may. But I will not make my life and conduct depend upon hope or faith.

PL. Is not anything upon which a man rests faith, even if it be the evidence of his senses? Your faith you say is in your values, and I would not shake it. But having fixed those, having counted the cost, having set your course over seas so stormy, amid currents so strong, in a vessel so frail, why may you not, as you look up at the sky that is always above you, now at the moon amid driving

clouds, dipping in and out, now at a sudden star, or it may be, at the whole spread of constellations shining undisturbed—why may you not admit the idea of a life larger than your own or than that of all mankind, and more deeply significant?

PH. Is it another myth that you would charm me to believe?

PL. Why not?

PH. Because myths are untrue.

PL. If I thought so I would not commend them. But to me they rather seem like clouds of incense steaming up into the spaces of the sky from their altars which are human souls.

PH. Perhaps, in their first generation. But how quickly they meet the ice-cold air and descend in storms of hail to torture and destroy!

PL. A myth should never become a creed.

PH. But why not, unless it is false?

PL. It is a dream, but a true one.

PH. What is true would not be a dream.

PL. It might seem to be one, to creatures immersed, like men, in a fog of ignorance and passion.

PH. How could such creatures know the true dream from the false?

PL. To this man or to that, there shoot down, from the place where there is light, flashes

and gleams which dazzle and blind him. What he can tell of his vision in stammering words is false, since he did not see clearly, yet true, for something he saw. So what he tells is a dream, and yet a true one.

PH. Yet even such dreams are dangerous. For like the sirens' songs they lure the mariner from his ship, so that he plunges into the sea leaving his vessel uncaptained to drift upon the rocks.

PL. If he tie himself to the mast, as Odysseus did, he may win wisdom and comfort, and yet pursue his voyage.

PH. Yet I fear your myth, for I am not sure that I am securely lashed.

PL. There may be a doubt! For otherwise, you would hardly have come, even by error, to the Elysian fields. Perhaps, if indeed I could sing like the sirens, you might be in danger. But I am no poet, and can but hint to you in prose what may comfort you when you return to earth, yet not divert you from your task.

PH. I will resist no more. Sing me then, or tell me, a myth that I could hear without danger.

PL. The mythologist of whom I think would be also a poet and a man of science. What is beautiful he would sing, what is true he would know, and what lies beyond knowledge he would divine.

Plato Mythologises

PH. First then, what would he sing?

PL. When he was young, all that beauty of the world which visits from above even your obscure and heavy planet.

PH. So poets indeed used to sing. But now their voices are gone dumb.

PL. As birds are silent in an eclipse; yet surely the sun will shine again. For the beauty is real, though it be but a shadow of that which is perceived by creatures finer of sense than men, in intellect more enlarged, and brighter and clearer in imagination.

PH. Already your sirens tempt me, as I drive, a prisoner, past their isles. Yet presently, as well I know, the sun will set, the tempest rise, and not even a star peep through the driving scud.

PL. Then it is that the man of science should begin to speak, carrying still the poet in his heart.

PH. And what would he say?

PL. What you yourself were saying when you were rapt, as I thought, into something like prophetic strain.

PH. No more a prophet I, than men of science, alas, are poets!

PL. Yet what could be a greater theme than worlds and motions, spaces and times, the infinitely small and the infinitely great, caught in that net of subtle proportions, finer than finest gossamer, that yet is able,

by some affinity, to measure and to mesh the grossest facts that cumber your imperfect senses.

PH. The theme is great, but incommunicable, perhaps, save by esoteric symbols.

PL. It need not be the worse for that.

PH. Perhaps not, but it would be useless precisely for the men who might most need myths, and who, like your philosophers, have turned back from the lure of art and the contemplation of science to help mankind towards a better life.

PL. Yet as the scientist should bear in his heart the poet, so should the mythologist the man of science.

PH. The mythologist is becoming himself a myth! But no matter, let us suppose him. What then is his myth to be?

PL. Shall it be the fall of man?

PH. Oh, above all, not that! For what, throughout all history, has been more trivial than such myths? It is as though they had been made by children who had no knowledge of evil, and so could afford to play with what real men have to suffer.

PL. The mythologist obeys. He shall deal not with the fall but with the rise of man.

PH. I wait to hear him.

PL. Open, he says, the eye of the imagination, and view from above the world of sense the poet sings, and the world of abstraction

the man of science measures. See how the whole universe is peopled with crowds of spirits.

PH. O Plato, what are you saying?

PL. What? Do you suppose that, while your little planet pullulates and swarms with living creatures, among which you men move like trees, sparse and disconnected for all your crowding, while they without ceasing flow around and over and within you, an ocean of perpetual generation—do you suppose that nowhere else in the vast expanses of infinity, is anything at all that is alive?

PH. We think it likely that our planet alone has the elements and the temperature and the gravity wherein and whereby life is possible.

PL. Say rather wherein and whereby bodies like yours could come into being and endure. But do you conceive, you little men, that the subtle fire of life can inhabit no other integuments than those that so grossly close you in? Or that senses so few and crude as those you possess can prescribe how higher souls may live and have their being? No! the world is full of gods, ascending the golden stairs, although your feeble vision cannot see them. Rising out of the deep abyss, the long ascent of life reaches up into the heaven of heavens; and of that chain

you, on your little step, are but one small link. For the whole universe groans and travails together to accomplish a purpose more august than you divine; and of that, your guesses at Good and Evil are but wavering symbols. Yet dark though your night be and stumbling your steps, your hand is upon the clue. Nourish then your imagination, strengthen your will and purify your love. For what imagination anticipates shall be achieved, what will pursues shall be done, and what love seeks shall be revealed.

PH. What is it I see? What is breaking in upon me? Whither am I rapt away? I am a song—I am an eye—I am a prayer—I am . . .

PL. He sleeps. And now he is gone. O thou great Power revealed and yet unknown to him and to me, keep him true to his purpose in that dark world to which he has returned, and bring him back, faithful and strong, to rest awhile here until he sets forth to greater and clearer tasks.

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